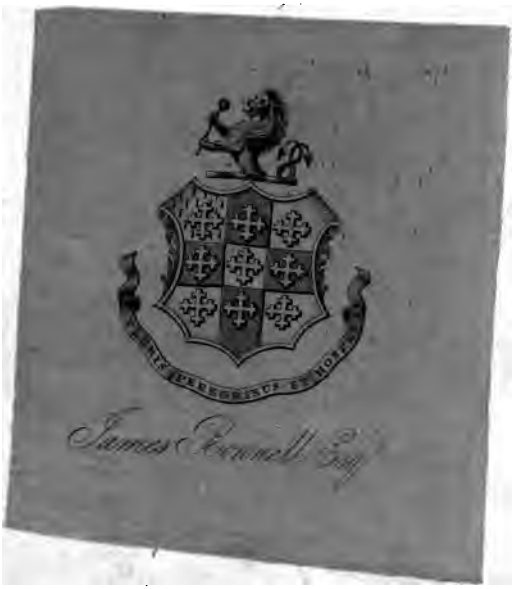

James Powell Esq.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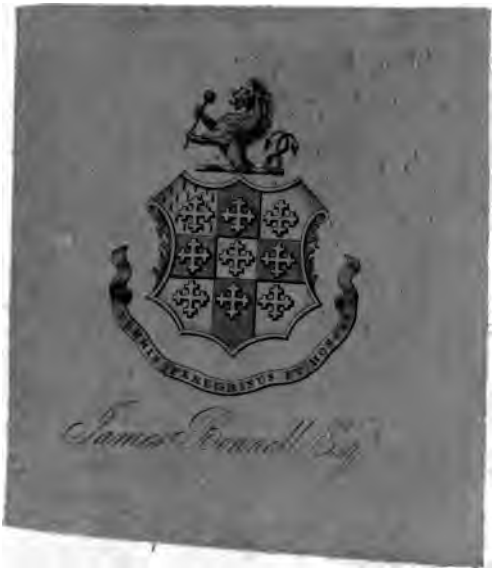
THE HISTORY OF LADY BARTON.

VOL. III.


James Pennell Esq

THE HISTORY OF LADY BARTON.

VOL. III.

THE HISTORY OF LADY BARTON, A NOVEL, IN LETTERS,

By Mrs. GRIFFITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE SECOND EDITION.

VOL. III.

Quibus pretium faceret ipsa fragilitas.
PLIN. de Crystallo.

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THE HISTORY OF LADY BARTON.

LETTER LVII.

Lady BARTON to Miſs CLEVELAND.

THE moment I had laid down my pen, Harriet flew into my room, to expreſs her ſurpriſe at Lord Lucan's arrival; but joy was much more predominant than wonder, in her artleſs eyes—Lucy came into my chamber, ſoon after, to aſſure me that ſhe did not know of his Lordſhip's coming, or even that he was an acquaintance of Sir Harry's, till he introduced him to her, that inſtant, below ſtairs. Harriet replied, with unuſual

vivacity, "Surely, Miſs Leiſter, you need "not make an apology for ſuch an "agreeable addition to our ſociety, as "Lord Lucan?" The moment theſe words had eſcaped her, her face was covered with bluſhes.

I took not the leaſt notice of her emotion, though it ſtruck me ſtrongly, when contraſted with the different ſenſations of fear and anxiety that affected my heart. A thouſand diſagreeable thoughts ruſhed at once into my mind; I determined, however, to act with the utmoſt circumſpection, and carefully to avoid any particular interview or converſation with his Lordſhip.

I did not quit my chamber till dinner was ſerved;—I ſpent the intermediate hour

hour extremely ill, in forming ſet ſpeeches, and faſhioning my conduct to impoſſible rules, which all vaniſhed out of my thoughts, like a dream, the moment I beheld Lord Lucan; and I ſuppoſe that no creature could ever have appeared more completely embarraſſed upon any occaſion.

His countenance, upon ſeeing me, was expreſſive of the ſincereſt delight; there was a brilliancy in his eye, and a liveliness in his complexion, which would have made the homelieſt features pleaſing—Alas! his wanted not this adventitious aid.——

My confuſion ſoon became contagious, and ſeemed to throw a general damp upon the ſpirits of the whole company—

Even the happy Creſwel abated of his chearfulneſs, and often ſent forth a look of inquiry, to try if he could diſcover the cauſe of his own change, in Lucy's now altered countenance.

I could not help perceiving the gloom I had ſpread, and endeavoured, but in vain, to rally my ſpirits:—they were ſunk too low to be recalled.—I would have retired, but that would have been an addition to my friend's diſtreſs—We made a dull and ſilent meal, and I quitted the table the moment it was poſſible.

I withdrew immediately to my chamber, and begged to be left alone—I was indulged by Lucy, though unwillingly. I tried to account to myſelf for the uncommon heavineſs which oppreſſed my heart.

heart.—The weakneſs of my paſt conduct appeared in the moſt glaring light to me; and, from the agonies of remorſe which I then felt, I concluded myſelf the moſt guilty of wretches.—

Yet my reaſon revolted againſt this opinion, but was ſtill utterly unable to baniſh it, or to account for the ſudden change in my ſentiments upon this ſubject, as no alteration had happened, either in Lord Lucan's conduct, or my ſituation, from the time that I had conſidered my attachment to him as perfectly innocent, becauſe it was abſolutely involuntary—I become almoſt diſtracted with my doubts; and, traverſing my chamber with haſty ſteps, I exclaimed, how poor, how inſufficient is human reaſon, either

to direct our actions, or restrain our passions!

O Thou, that stillest the raging of the sea! and calmest the fury of the winds! abate this conflict in thy creature's breast! and point the way in which my feet should tread to find the paths of peace! —A sudden gush of tears followed this ejaculation, my mind grew calm, and I thought I could at that instant have taken an everlasting leave of Lord Lucan, with the most perfect resignation.

I continued musing upon the subject of my future conduct, for a long time; and at last determined, that I would endeavour to assume as much chearfulness as possible, while I remained at Elm-grove; that, in a very few days after the wedding,

ing, I would return to Southfield, but, before I went, write a letter to Lord Lucan, fully expreſſive of the change in my ſentiments with regard to him, or rather myſelf, enjoining him to make no reply, nor attempt ever to ſee me more.

Soon after I had formed this reſolution, Lucy tapped ſoftly at my chamber-door.—She ſaw I had been weeping, but as I ſmiled, and held out my hand on her approach, ſhe ſaid my face might be compared to an April day, but as ſunſhine ſeemed now to prevail ſhe hoped there would be no more ſhowers—we joined the company, and I with pleaſure perceived that I was much leſs conſtrained in my manner to Lord Lucan, and every body elſe, than I had been at dinner.

A little flight of Sir Harry's, at the time that the gentlemen were to leave us, and return to town, threw me into a ſecond embarraſſment—he inſiſted upon his being permitted to ſalute all the ladies, as he ſhould never be another night a bachelor; and that Lord Lucan, and a young gentleman, whoſe name is Weſton, and was then preſent, ſhould ſalute Miſs Leiſter, as he ſhould not chuſe to ſpare them one of her kiſſes, when he ſhould have an excluſive right to the ſole property of them.

Young Weſton, who, perhaps, miſtakes vivacity for good breeding, propoſed this folly's becoming general, and it was impoſſible to object ſeriouſly to a matter that appeared ſo very trifling; eſpecially upon ſuch an occaſion as this.

—Once

—Once at a wedding, you know, is a proverb.

Yet neither you, nor any of that company, will, I hope, ever know the pangs I felt at receiving a kiſs from Lord Lucan.—It ſeemed to coſt him almoſt as much pain as it did me, for he trembled as if he had been ſeized with an ague-fit.—The conſent of my heart ſhocked me with a conſciouſneſs of guilt.—I am ſorry the fooliſh affair happened—but I will think no more of it.

It is now near two o'clock in the morning of Lucy's wedding-day; and as I ſuppoſe I ſhall not have much leiſure, for ſome time to come, I would not omit, before I lay me down to reſt, if that may be, acquainting my dear con-

feſſor and counſellor with the ſtate of that heart, which, while it beats, will ever retain the tendereſt affection for her.

Every good wiſh attends my brother; and I hope I may by this time add, his amiable wife.——My Fanny's claim to that title, is, I think and hope, not far diſtant.

The renewal of Lord Hume's connections with Sir George might have been merely accidental; but his continuing them in the manner he has done, even to the incumbrance of my brother, in his preſent circumſtances, ſpeaks the revival of his attachment to you much ſtronger than the moſt direct and formal propoſition could poſſibly have done.—His attorney might perform the one, but his

paſſion

paſſion only could be capable of the other.

Lord Hume has his merits as well as his faults; and the mild eye of my ſiſter's charity is ever more open to the former than the latter; and, if the union I have hinted at ſhould take place, I truſt they will become every day more conſpicuous.

Adieu, my Fanny.

L. BARTON.

P. S. Eight o' clock in the morning.—I have paſſed a miſerable night—diſturbed ſlumbers, and terrifying dreams—If I were ſuperſtitious, I ſhould imagine ſome ill fate awaits me——Alas! how totally unfit am I for the feſtivity of a bridal day!

LETTER LVIII.

Lady BARTON to Miſs CLEVELAND.

OUR wedding, my Fanny, was conducted with the greateſt propriety and elegance; there were eighteen perſons preſent, the eldeſt of whom, Mrs. Layton excepted, was not eight and twenty.—Pleaſure ſat ſmiling on every placid brow; even I endeavoured to aſſume an air of chearfulneſs, but thought myſelf, like Lucifer in heaven, unbleſſed amidſt the bleſſed!

It is ſaid that every woman looks better on her wedding-day, than any other of her life.—I confeſs I never ſaw Lady Creſwel appear ſo beautiful; there was a ſort of ſerene happineſs in her countenance,

nance, which I know not how to describe; her clear brown complexion appeared almost transparent, yet was often heightened to the most becoming blush, by the fond looks of her enamoured bridegroom.

The dress of all brides is nearly the same;—you may therefore conclude that Lady Creswel wore white and silver.—The bride-maids were dressed exactly alike, *par hazard*, in pale pink and silver.—My cloaths were—— Gracious heaven! how can I write about such trifling matters, while my heart is breaking?—I must fly, my Fanny! for ever fly from the sight of one, who becomes every hour more dangerous to my repose!

We

We have now been three days together under the ſame roof, yet have I been lucky enough to avoid any particular converſation with Lord Lucan.—He perceives my caution; his vanity is doubtleſs flattered by it, yet he affects to appear unhappy; his looks are expreſſive of the tendereſt ſorrow, and he ſometimes gazes on me till he ſeems to have loſt himſelf.

Poor Harriet watches his eyes—alas! they are but ſeldom turned on her! If he is really as wretched as he ſeems, he is to the full as much to be pitied as myſelf.—Why did we ever meet? or, why not ſooner? That heart which, in ſpite of the reſtraint of duty, is but too much devoted to him now, had it been free my ſiſter——I fear 'tis criminal to indulge

dulge this fond idea—I will ſupreſs it then.

I have not had leiſure to begin the letter I intend to write to him; but to morrow, or the next day—in ſhort, before I ſeal this, I will.—And yet what can I ſay to him?—Have I ought to complain of in his conduct, that can warrant an everlaſting breach between us?—Has he not kept within the bounds preſcribed by me Has he even preſumed to hint he thinks them too ſevere? Unleſs involuntary ſighs and tender looks are conſtrued into crimes, Lucan has not offended!—Yet, yet I will break off this—I know not what to call it—improper, at leaſt, as well as painful connection!—I am almoſt diſtracted.

I have this moment received a letter from Lord Lucan.—I am glad of it.—

This

This is encroaching.—I have now ſome pretence for my intended breach.—Yet read it, Fanny.—I will copy it, if my faſt-ſtreaming tears don't waſh the lines away.

To Lady Barton.

IF, as I hoped, the moſt profound ſubmiſſion to her will, whom my mind worſhips, and my eyes adore, could have preſerved me her eſteem, never had the unhappy Lucan infringed Lady Barton's command, nor even dared to repine at being forbidden to expreſs his hopeleſs paſſion, by ſpeech or letter to her.

But, alas! Madam, though love is blind, lovers are quickſighted; and I but too clearly perceive, that I have loſt that portion

portion of your regard, with which I had, perhaps, too vainly flattered myſelf.

I mean not, Madam, to reproach you with this cruel change, but humbly to implore you to inform me, if I have—tho' unwittingly, heaven knows!—been ſo unfortunate as to have offended you, even in the ſlighteſt article of my conduct.

If my appearing before you, at this time, without permiſſion, be imputed to me, give me leave to transfer the blame, upon chance, which led me hither, without knowing that you had intended to have honoured Lady Creſwel's wedding with your preſence. The tranſports I was ſenſible of, on meeting you ſo unexpectedly here, cannot ſurely be deemed

deemed a crime; and yet the misery I have since sustained, has made me already sufficiently atone for it, as if it had been one.

Even my present presumption bears its own apology along with it, as your cruelty and my justification required it. The unhappy, but unoffending suppliant, may expostulate even with Heaven itself, without impiety.

I shall trespass no farther on you, Madam, than just to assure you, that I find I belong no longer to myself and that, in spite both of you and me,

I am, and shall remain,

ever yours,

LUCAN.

What

What ſhall I ſay to him, my ſiſter? What anſwer ſhall I make to lines ſo full of tenderneſs and ſubmiſſion? Can I be unjuſt enough to reproach or condemn him, while he is guiltleſs of any offence towards me? Yet, if I acquit him, do I not criminate myſelf? Muſt he not think me unworthy of his regards, if female caprice alone ſhould appear the motive of my altered conduct?—I will not enter on the ſubject, but coldly tell him, that I firſt repented, then conquered my paſt weakneſs, and bid him try to follow my example.——O, Fanny! I ſhall break his gentle heart! If but my own would burſt, I ſhould be happy!

How inconſiſtent is this letter with my laſt!—Why can I not again recover that calmneſs,

calmneſs, which even a tranſient devotion had inſpired?—Alas! becauſe my piety was but temporary, and tranſitory!—Like the ungrateful Iſraelites, *I ſought the Lord in my trouble.*—But has he not promiſed *to be nigh to all thoſe who call upon him?*—His mercy is not limited, and in that hope will I confide.

More than half the night is elapſed; but I will not cloſe my eyes till I have written to Lord Lucan.—Should I defer it till to-morrow, his ſupplicating eye and tender looks may change my unfirm purpoſe.——Would to heaven I had not come here!—Never was any creature ſo altered in the time.——Sir William will certainly perceive the change; and how ſhall I account for it?

It is done, my ſiſter! I have taken an everlaſting leave of Lord Lucan!—I will copy what I have written—How infinitely ſhort does it fall of what I wiſhed to ſay!

To Lord LUCAN.

My Lord,

PERFECTLY ſenſible, as I am, of the faultineſs of my conduct, both towards you and myſelf, I ſubmit, without repining, to the cenſure implied in your letter—But, alas! my Lord, the crime I am there charged with, is not the ſource of my ſelf-condemnation.—That you may be perfectly convinced of my ſincerity, I will confeſs that I ſaw your growing paſſion, from its earlieſt infancy, and, at the ſame time, beheld you in the moſt favourable light;—yet I vainly hoped

hoped, that, ſituated as I then was, my virtue would have been proof, even againſt your merit, and my ſenſe of it;—and that the knowing my heart ought to be devoted to another, was ſufficient to render it ſo.——How have I ſince bluſhed at that preſumption, which was founded, not in ſtrength, but weakneſs.

From the moment that the accidental circumſtance of the picture, at Southfield, had brought on a confeſſion of our mutual ſentiments, peace, has been a ſtranger to my breaſt! a conſciouſneſs of the irrevocable injury I had been guilty of, towards a perſon I dare not even name, at preſent, has haunted me ever ſince.

The

The conſtant perturbation of my mind, with other mortifications ariſing from the ſame ſource, brought on a dangerous illneſs, which led me a willing victim almoſt to the grave. I now rejoice that what I then moſt ardently deſired, was not the conſequence of the joint diſorder, both of heart, and mind, and body.

Yes, my Lord, I wiſh to live, that my future conduct may atone for my paſt folly; and that the example of the weakeſt of the weaker ſex, may enable you to conquer a paſſion, which, if indulged, muſt be productive of miſery only, both to yourſelf, and its unhappy object.

I will not boaſt, my Lord, that I have already accompliſhed this arduous taſk

—My nature is ſincere ;—but, as a proof, that I mean ſeriouſly to ſucceed in the attempt, I, from this moment, interdict myſelf from ever correſponding or converſing with your Lordſhip more; and do here declare, that I will never pardon your attempting either to ſee, or write to me, on any future occaſion of our lives.

I ſhall ever retain the ſincereſt wiſhes for your Lordſhip's happineſs, though this is the laſt time that I ſhall ever ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your affectionate friend,

L. B.

I will not comment on this hateful letter: ſurely I never wrote ſo bad a one!—But is that wonderful?—Is not the

the heart, our beſt inſpirer?—And can I ſay that mine dictated this ſevere decree? —Yet I truſt my dear Fanny will approve it.—It has afforded my mind too a temporary relief.

I mean to order my coach as ſoon as I riſe in the morning, to ſend this letter to Lord Lucan, before I appear at breakfaſt, and ſet out directly after for Southfield, without giving him time to recover enough from his ſurprize, ſo as to attempt an expoſtulation.

I am tempted to leave Harriet with Lady Creſwel, that I may perform the journey alone.—What a journey will it be!—

Adieu, adieu,

L. Barton.

LETTER LIX.

Miſs CLEVELAND to Lady BARTON.

INDEED, my ever dear Louiſa, your letters have been a heavy alloy to the happineſs that I ought now to partake of;—but, like Joſeph, when ſurrounded with all the magnificence and delights of the Egyptian court, I weep upon the neck of my Benjamin—Yet let me flatter myſelf, that good, and not ill fate awaits my ſiſter; as I may now believe the conflict's paſt, and that her own reaſon and virtue have triumphed over a weakneſs, which, as ſhe juſtly obſerves, could only be productive of miſery—Of miſery, perhaps, in the extreme. —Yes, my ſiſter, I do moſt truly applaud both your letter, and your conduct towards

wards Lord Lucan; and, what is of infinitely more consequence, you will yourself approve it.—You will again enjoy "That peace, which goodness bosoms "ever."—And even feel an higher degree of exultation in your mind, at having recovered the lost path, than those who have never strayed, can possibly be sensible of.

With this prophecy I will close the subject of your late letters, and shall be impatient till I find it verified by the calm chearfulness which will, I hope, diffuse itself through all your future correspondence.

I have much to tell you, both of myself and our dear brother.—We have had a wedding, as well as you; but 'twas

a very private one:—Yet ſurely I may ſay with Fitzoſborne,

"What tho' in ſilence ſacred Hymen trod,
"Nor lyre proclaim'd, nor garland crown'd the God:
"What tho' nor feaſt, nor revel dance was there,
"Vain pomp of joy, the happy well may ſpare!)
"Yet love unfeigned, and conſcious honour led
"The ſpotleſs virgin to the bridal bed.
"All Heav'n, and friendly pow'r,
"Approv'd the vow, and bleſs'd the hour."

But, to proceed regularly—In my laſt I told you that we ſhould quit St. Omer's in a few days.—Do not be ſhocked, Louiſa, when I tell you that we were all very near remaining there for ever!

As Delia recovered her health, Sir George's ſpirits returned; and, after paſſing a very chearful evening, this day three weeks, we retired rather before midnight to our chambers.—I want

words to expreſs the terror I felt, when I was awaked, about four o'clock in the morning, by people ſcreaming out fire, and beating at my door, in order to force it open.—I found myſelf involved in ſo thick a ſmoke, that I could not find the paſſage out of my chamber, and concluded that I muſt inevitably periſh.

Amidſt the variety of voices that repeatedly called upon me to pull up the bolt, I thought I diſtinguiſhed Lord Hume's—Perhaps this circumſtance added to my confuſion.—On a ſudden the voice ceaſed, and I found myſelf, as it were, left alone in the midſt of the flames, which then burſt into one ſide of the room.

At that moment a ladder was fixed againſt one of my windows, and Lord

Hume entering by it, caught me in his arms, and carried me I know not how, but totally devoid of ſenſe, to his apartment on the other ſide of the ſtreet.

When I had recovered my reaſon, I had the happineſs of finding my brother and Delia ſitting by me, and my champion kneeling before me, and pouring lavender water on my hands and face, with a look of ſuch tender ſolicitude, as if his life depended upon mine.

The emotion of my gratitude, or call it what you pleaſe, was too ſtrong for my ſpirits—I fainted a ſecond time.—I was put to bed in this ſituation, and a ſurgeon had opened a vein in my arm, before I opened my eyes again.

Never can I forget the expreſſive look of ſorrow which appeared in Lord Hume's

Hume's countenance! — I confess it, Louisa, it in one moment obliterated all his past offences, and he became even dearer to my heart than he had ever been before.—His saving my life, even at the hazard of his own, was only a proof of his spirit and humanity, which he ought to have exerted for any other woman, in the same dreadful situation:—But the tender anxiety he shewed towards me afterwards, spoke the fond lover; and the delicacy of his behaviour from that event, has strengthened his claim to that title.

As soon as my arm was bound up, I tried to express my gratitude to Lord Hume, but could not—Tears stopped my utterance, but relieved the oppression of my heart.—He seemed as little able himself to speak as I, but, in an in-

coherent manner, ſaid, he was the happieſt man alive, and kiſſed my hand in tranſport.—Sir George then made every perſon withdraw, except my maid, and left me for ſome hours to compoſe myſelf.

I found, upon enquiry, that the fire which had conſumed three houſes, began at a ſugar baker's, who lived next door to us, and that it was not diſcovered till a part of our houſe was in flames.—An old ſervant of Lord Hume's was the firſt perſon who ſaw the blaze;—The poor man happened not to be well, and could not ſleep:—To his ſickneſs, under Providence, are we indebted for our lives, and he ſhall never more feel the fatigue of ſervitude or labour, his lord and my brother having rendered him independent for life.

This

This accident, you may ſuppoſe, retarded our ſetting out.—Delia, who ſuffered leſs than I from the fright, was an equal loſer by the fire.—In ſhort, neither we nor our ſervants had been able to ſave any of our cloaths from the flames.—You may conclude, that the dear good Walter ſupplied us with every neceſſary till we could get them made.

I fear the apprehenſion ſhe felt on our account, before ſhe knew that we were ſafe, has hurt her much.—She looked ſo very delicate when we parted, that I ſcarce dare flatter myſelf with the hopes of ever ſeeing her more.

While we were delayed at St. Omer's, a ſecond courier arrived from Mrs. Colville, with a letter to Sir George, ac-

knowledging her paſſion for him, pleading that in her excuſe, and imploring him in the moſt abject terms, not to expoſe her weakneſs, by carrying on the ſuit againſt her; and aſſuring him of her full conſent to his marriage with her daughter.

In order to avoid being brought to England by the chancellor's meſſenger, ſhe has retired privately from Toulouſe, and has placed herſelf in a convent, but where we know not, nor ſhall ever enquire.—I hope ſhe will remain, wherever ſhe is, for life, as I really believe, that the bare ſight of her would ſhock our poor Delia more than the fire had done.

She has ſent back the ſmall trunk which belonged to the perſon who died at

at Amiens, and has desired that Sir George may open it, in order to forward the papers in it, to the party for whom they are designed; if this can be discovered from the initials, which is the only address they have.—My brother has assigned this commission to me, and as soon as I have a moment's leisure, I will execute it faithfully.

If I continue to write so circumstantially, there will be no end of this letter; you must therefore take leave of St. Omer's, and suffer yourself to be instantly transported across the water with me, as if you were reading one of Shakespeare's plays, and conclude us now safely arrived in London, whence I am now writing to you.

After my brother had waited on the chancellor, and shewn him Mrs. Colville's

letters, he moſt readily gave his conſent to Delia's marriage, and ſaid if he were a bachelor, he ſhould be very proud of ſuch an help-mate, as the fair lady,—meaning me, Louiſa,—who had acted with ſo much prudence in the conduct of this extraordinary affair.

As both the parties were very well inclined to enter into the holy ſtate of matrimony, they readily diſpenſed with the parade of a public wedding; and on Saturday laſt, my brother had the happineſs of receiving his well-beloved wife, from the hands of my beloved huſband, that is to be—For we ſhall take more ſtate and form upon us than they have done, I aſſure you.

Joy to my Louiſa!—The happy pair ſet out next day for Cleveland-hall, whither

ther I ſhall follow them in a very few days.—Mary Granville and Lord Hume are to accompany me; and the moment I know my Louiſa's heart is at peace, I will give Lord Hume a legal claim to mine, but not till then; for indeed, my ſiſter, I cannot taſte of joy, while you are wretched.

Lord Hume and my brother have complained much of the dejection of my ſpirits ſince we came from France;—I have attributed the change in me to that of the climate; but I think they don't acquieſce in that opinion, and ſuſpect a hidden cauſe of ſorrow, though they know not from whence it can ariſe—O, be happy, my Louiſa! and make me ſo!

Lord Hume's chariot ſtops at the door —A lawyer with him—How tremendous!

dous! and not a creature with me!—Run, Robert, for Miſs Granville—Horrid parchment!—Shocking deeds!—My hand trembles—I can never ſign them—How did you!

Adieu, adieu, my ſiſter!

F. CLEVELAND.

LETTER LX.

Lord HUME to Lord LUCAN.

London.

IF you are not abſolutely dwindled into a ſtate of vegetation, and *fixed like a plant to one peculiar ſpot*, I conjure you, by all the powers of friendſhip, my dear Lucan, to ſet out on the receipt of this, to be witneſs to that happineſs, which I confeſs beyond either my expectation.

tation or deſerts, and which I can hardly believe to be real.

Liſten——Fanny Cleveland's lovely hand,—what a contraſt to her cheek! then bluſhing like the roſy morn, has ſigned our marriage articles, and I now only wait for that ſhort paſſport to happineſs, which is contained in a few myſtical words, that, I ſuppoſe, are to hold us inchanted for the reſt of our lives.

For my own part, I acknowledge the ſpell already.—Could all the arguments of philoſophy ever have convinced me, without my own experience, that the ſlighteſt touch of Cleveland's hand, ſhould communicate a richer tranſport to my ſoul, than the cloſeſt embrace of Margarita.—In one caſe I feel myſelf *a man*, in the other, but *a brute*. In the firſt inſtance, I

am

am ſenſible of the union of mind and body; in the ſecond, my ſenſations were totally devoid of all ſentiment whatever.—Is not this charming enthuſiaſm?—I miſtook my tranſports, before—Took giddineſs for frolic, extravagance for ſpirit, folly for fondneſs, and appetite for paſſion.

On my honour, Lucan! my Fanny is ten thouſand times more lovely than when I left England.—In ſhort, I did not know her then, or I could never have been ſo infatuated as I was, to a creature ſo every way her inferior—But come, my friend, come, I again intreat you, and ſee this earthly paragon.

You ſay you are at an immenſe diſtance from the object of your affection—What ſignifies then a thouſand miles, more or

leſs,

leſs, ſince you are deprived of the pleaſure of ſeeing her?—I begin to think ſhe muſt be ſome unnatural, manufactured prude.—Don't be angry, Lucan, I have no reaſon to abuſe her, but on your account.—Not even to permit your writing to her!—Perhaps your quitting the kingdom where ſhe is, may bring her to better temper.——I am but a bad judge in theſe romantic matters, though I am certain that no man living is at this moment more ſincerely in love than I am.

Sir George Cleveland was married laſt week, and I had the honour of giving the bride away.—She is a charming girl, I confeſs, but nothing to be compared to my Cleveland.—But they have beauty enough between them to ſtock a ſeraglio.

I do

I do moſt ſincerely wiſh to have you at my wedding, Lucan; but I ſhall not wait an hour for your coming; nor ſhould I think of your being preſent at the ceremony, but that my Fanny has declared ſhe will not beſtow her hand, without the concurrence of a ſiſter who lives in Ireland, a Lady Barton.—Do you know her, Lucan? ſhe was a charming girl before ſhe married, though not quite as handſome as my Fanny.

You ſee then you have no time to loſe; for I muſt not ſuppoſe that her Ladyſhip, however matronly ſhe may have become ſince her marriage, can poſſible object now to a connection which ſhe ſeemed once to encourage and approve. Give the reins to your horſes, and away, my friend, to

yours, moſt truly,

HUME.

P. S. If you ſhould not find me in London, poſt off to Cleveland-hall.—I long to introduce you to Sir George and his lady, but more particularly to my dear Fanny.

LETTER LXI.

Lady BARTON to Miſs CLEVELAND.

DO not, I conjure you, my dear Louiſa, add to my miſery, by delaying your own happineſs—The firſt has already reached its zenith,—O may the latter do ſo too!

I will not enter into any farther explanation, nor mention a ſingle particular relative to myſelf, till I know that you are married. If, therefore, you are anxious about the moſt intereſting events

of

of my life, I ſhall ſhortly receive a letter, from *Lady Hume*, which will then entitle her to a confidence now with-held from my beloved Fanny Cleveland, by her

ever affectionate ſiſter,

LOUISA BARTON.

LETTER LXII.

Miſs CLEVELAND to Lady BARTON.

I HAVE heſitated, for ſome time, dear Louiſa, whether, in your preſent dejected ſtate of mind, I ſhould venture to communicate to you a ſtory of much woe, which was contained in the papers of the unhappy young woman who died at Amiens.

The

The diverting of any current muſt neceſſarily abate its force, and whatever can awaken our ſenſibility for the misfortunes of other, muſt, at leaſt for the time, render us inſenſible to our own.

I believe too, that compariſon weighs much in our eſtimation of good and evil; and though a generous heart, even labouring under the ſevereſt calamities, may be incapable of forming a wiſh for relief, at the expence of another's happineſs, yet I am perſuaded, that there is a ſort of alleviation to be found, in reflecting that there are, or rather, that there *have been*, others much more wretched than ourſelves.

Upon this principle then I ſhall ſend you this melancholy ſtory, which I ſhould never have been miſtreſs of, had

the

the papers in which it was contained, though unſealed, been properly addreſſed; but as they were only ſuperſcribed with initials, I was obliged to look into the contents, in order to forward them to the perſon for whom they were deſigned; and I hope my taking a copy of them, for you, and you only, will not be conſidered as a breach of truſt, either to the living or the dead.

As ſoon as my brother and ſiſter went out of town, which was the firſt moment I had leiſure, I opened the little trunk which Mrs. Colville's laſt meſſenger brought to St. Omer's, and which may properly enough be called the *lachrymal urn*, of the unfortunate Maria; for in it was the tearful narrative of a life of ſorrows, depoſited; and though ſhe is now

removed

removed from a poſſibility of feeling them, they ſtill retain the magnetic power of living grief, and muſt attract the ſigh of pity from every tender, every feeling heart.

The STORY *of* MARIA.

To Mr. EDWARD S——.

Will the moſt tender and affectionate of brothers, with patience, condeſcend to read the ſad confeſſion of a dying wretch, who owns herſelf unworthy of his kindneſs,—Yet, trembling on the verge of life, ſolicits to obtain his pardon and pity!—Alas! my Edward, they will never reach me!—No friendly voice can ever ſooth my ear, or ſpeak peace to my perturbed heart! for ſoon the motion of its pulſe ſhall ceaſe, and this poor ſhattered frame return to duſt.—Drop then

one

one fond forgiving tear upon these pages :—'Tis all I now can ask, or you, ere long, can grant.

The story of my misconduct and misfortunes, perhaps, will reach, you before this letter.—How does my heart now bleed for that indignant grief your generous mind must feel, for a beloved sister's infamy!

I do not mean to extenuate my faults! —Alas! they will not bear extenuation! —And, conscious as I am of my approach to that tribunal, before which we must all ere long appear, deceit or falshood would be as weak as wicked.—Then hear the faithful story of my heart, and judge me as one erring mortal should another.

In

In leſs than a year after you ſailed for Bengal, our dear father died—What an irreparable loſs was mine!—I need not tell you that as he was in the church, we were at once deprived of the principal part of his fortune, with his life, and that there did not remain above an hundred pounds a year, being a life annuity, purchaſed for my mother with her own portion, to ſupport her and me.

The altered countenances and behaviour of thoſe we had formerly called friends, at Glouceſter, made my mother determine on quitting a place where, from her want of knowing the world, ſhe conſidered herſelf as *particularly ill treated.*—She was then firſt taught, that proſperity is the cement of modern friendſhip; and when that fails, the tottering ſtructure ſinks into decay.

She condeſcended to conſult me upon our future ſcheme of life; though, as I was not then fifteen, I was but ill qualified for an adviſer; however, I had heard that Bath was a cheap place of reſidence, for thoſe who ſettle themſelves as inhabitants there; and as I alſo believed it to be an agreeable lively ſcene, I had often wiſhed to go thither, during my father's life; and therefore uſed all my little rhetoric with my mother, to fix us there.

I prevailed; and the firſt year we ſpent in it was by many degrees the happieſt of my life.—We lived in a ſmall houſe, near the Croſs-bath, with the greateſt œconomy.—My mother did not go much into public, but we met with many former acquaintances, who were ſo obliging

to

to matronize me to the rooms, play-house, and walks, as often as it was thought proper to let me appear abroad.

You cannot, my Edward, have forgotten my face and person, and may suppose that I was not without admirers, in the midst of so many gay flutterers as abound at Bath.—There are, I believe, fewer serious engagements made there, than at any place where such a concourse of young people continually meet.—Whether this is owing to the perpetual dissipation they live in, or to the constant rotation of new faces that appear there daily, is not to me material.—My heart, alas! was but too susceptible of a tender impression; and Captain L——, son to Sir Richard L——, first inspired my artless bosom with love.

During the firſt three months of our acquaintance, we ſaw each other every day; nor did the idea of parting, or any other painful thought, obtrude upon our minds, to interrupt the pleaſing delirium of our mutual fondneſs.

Our happineſs was then moſt certainly too great to laſt.—A letter from Sir Richard L—— to his ſon, acquainting him that he was promoted to the rank of Captain, in a regiment which was then ſtationed in Ireland, with a peremptory command to ſet out thither immediately, was the firſt and we then thought the ſevereſt ſhock, that fate could inflict on us.

Though my mother was extremely indulgent to me, yet, from a delicacy natural to young minds, I had never ventured

tured to acquaint her with my attachment to Captain L——. To this ſmall, but fatal error, I, perhaps, owe moſt of the ſubſequent miſeries of my life.

The moſt intimate acquaintance I then had, was a young married lady, about three and twenty, who ſeemed to have the greateſt friendſhip for my lover, and tenderneſs for me, imaginable—Her name is ———, but I will not expoſe her, for the ſake of a reſpectable family to whom ſhe is allied—though ſhe has brought infamy and ſorrows upon me and mine.

I will call her Matilda—To her then I diſcloſed the anguiſh of my heart, at the ſad thought of parting with my lover, and wept upon her boſom—She ſeemed

to conſider my diſtreſs as trifling:—Told me I had too much ſenſibility to be happy, and adviſed me to conquer it;—then added, laughing, theſe firſt paſſions are always troubleſome, but you will not be ſo much affected at parting with your next lover. I was offended and diſguſted at her ſpeech—The very idea had profligacy in it.—She quickly perceived my reſentment, and had addreſs enough to change her ſtile, and ſoothe me into the moſt perfect confidence.

During the ſhort time that Captain L—— remained at Bath, after his father's ſummons, we three were inſeparable.—He would have married me, at that interval; but, as he was not of age, being then but juſt turned of twenty, he could get no clergyman to perform the ceremony

mony for us.—At length the fatal hour of ſeparation arrived—Happineſs and he were one, in my eſtimation—They fled, alas! together.

From his letters I received the ſole conſolation that could alleviate the pangs of abſence.—They were frequent and tender; yet I thought latterly, that I ſometimes diſcovered a little tendency towards jealouſy in them; but, unconſcious as I was of having given the ſlighteſt ground for ſuſpicion, by my conduct, I thought it beneath me to enter into a particular defence againſt a general charge; and therefore ſuffered every hint upon this ſubject to paſs unnoticed.

We had lived now above a year at Bath, and my mother began to find her-

ſelf extremely ſtraitened in her circumſtances—You had it not then in your power, my dear and generous Edward, to relieve her diſtreſs; and I am certain that one of the ſevereſt, which ſhe herſelf felt, was her not being able to aſſiſt you in the firſt dawnings of your then infant fortunes.

My mother, though paſt the prime of life, was ſtill handſome; and, at ſuch a criſis, dreſs is of much more conſequence to a woman, than at an earlier æra; ſhe had been uſed to elegance and affluence, yet ſhe chearfully reſigned them all, and continued to wear deep mourning, in order to ornament me with the remains of her former paraphernalia, and every little addition that ſhe could make to it.

Matilda uſed to take me with her frequently to the rooms, and generally invited me to private parties, at her own apartments;—ſometimes with my mother, but oftener without. — She always played high, and ſeemed ſolicitous to poſſeſs me with the ſame paſſion.— I reſiſted the temptation, for ſome time, on account of the danger and indecorum of ſuch a courſe of life.— To which ſhe replied, that as cards were now become the *bon ton* of all civilized nations, the latter of my objections was ſufficiently obviated; and that, in order to guard againſt the former, the earlier I began to practiſe, the better.—For, as I ſhould ſoon be a perſon of rank and fortune, by the death of Sir Richard L——, I could not think of living like a houſewife, in ſuch an *improved and en-*

lightened age, as the present; and that, as high play had now became the general amusement and occupation of all people intitled to associate in polite life, the sooner I was initiated into the *arts* and *sciences* of gaming, the safer it would be for my husband's fortune, or my own.

She would sometimes make me hold her cards, while she sat by, and instructed me how to play them; then she would make me join in the stake, and at last led me in to adventure for myself, on her promise to lend me what money I might lose, till I should be in a condition of repaying her.

I am convinced that there is but one step easy to avoid, in vice, and that is the first.—The fear and disgust with which I had

had engaged at play, at the begining, wore off by degrees; and habit had ſeduced my mind into ſuch a paſſion for cards, in a ſhort time, that I regretted the Sundays that my mother confined me at home, after the church ſervice was over, to read proper diſcourſes, and liſten to her moſt excellent inſtructions.

Mr. W——, an elderly gentleman of fortune, uſed generally to be of our parties.—He ſeemed to diſtinguiſh me, in a particular manner, and uſed to favour me at play; which, as ſoon as I diſcovered, I immediately reſented, and declared I would lay down my cards, if he ſhould ever again attempt to pay me the leaſt compliment of the kind, to the diſadvantage, either of himſelf, or any of the reſt of the company.—This pro-

per reproof of mine obliged him to restrain his too indelicate galantry towards me for the future.

My card-accompt preſerved itſelf pretty even for ſome time, without giving me occaſion to treſpaſs on the credit which my friend Matilda had made me ſo voluntary a proffer of; till one night that I happened to be led in by her, to engage at loo, which was a game I had never played at before, and knew ſo little of, as not to be aware how deeply I might be involved, upon a turn of luck againſt me.—The ſtakes were not high, but, as the forfeits were unlimited, I found myſelf indebted to Mr. W——, in the ſum of thirty guineas, when the party broke up.

I applied to my friend for the money, but ſhe put me off at that time, by ſaying

ing that I ſhould try my fortune again, the next evening, at her apartments; and that ſhe would then put whatever ballance ſhould appear againſt me on a proper footing for payment.—I was tempted to venture on a ſecond eſſay at the ſame game, and concluded the night with doubling the debt to the ſame perſon. I then claimed Matilda's promiſe; but ſhe anſwered me with great coldneſs, and a conſtrained ſmile, that my creditor was a gentleman of large fortune, and, as he had made her a confidant of his partiality in my favour, ſhe ſhould think it a breach of honour to take me out of his hands, by releaſing me from ſo trifling an obligation as this was.

The ſurpriſe and alarm I felt upon this occaſion is not to be expreſſed—It was

too

too ſurely a preſage of all my future miſeries!—I began to find that I had been moſt treacherouſly dealt by—I retired to my chamber, without ſpeaking even to my mother, and paſſed the night in walking about diſtractedly, and crying out, How ſhall I be ever able to diſcharge this dangerous debt! or how render a juſtifiable account of my conduct, either to my mother, to the world, but more eſpecially to my dear Captain L——!

I confined myſelf at home for ſeveral days after this adventure, during which time Matilda came often to ſolicit my returning *into the world* again, and affected to ridicule my prudery, in being rendered ſo uneaſy about ſo inſignificant a circumſtance, which, ſhe aſſured me was

but

but one of the common events of life. However, I continued resolute in keeping myself retired, and remained inconsolable, on this unhappy incident, till I received a letter from Captain L——, which I opened with transport, hoping it would calm my mind, and restore my peace again.—Alas! what an aggravation to my misfortunes and distress, did I meet with there!

He told me that his regiment was ordered to America, and that he should embark with it in less than ten days, which time was elapsed at the moment I received his letter.—He added, that my conduct had convinced him, that, if he should never return to England, I would be easily consoled for his loss, though he should never cease to regret mine—Wish-

ed

ed me every happineſs that a life of diſſipation could yield, and bad me farewell—For ever!

My mind already diſturbed and agitated, this cruel letter almoſt unhinged my reaſon, and ſunk me into the moſt pitiable ſtate of dejection.—My mother, who was ignorant of the real cauſe of my diſturbance, apprehended ſome heavy diſorder to be falling upon me, and attended me night and day, with the fondeſt anxiety imaginable.

For ſome time I continued in a ſtate of the profoundeſt melancholy;—at length the voice of nature waked my reaſon.—The tears and ſighs of a fond parent, by ſympathetic force attracted mine, and called forth all my gratitude—I ſtrove to hide

hide my anguish, even in smiles, but it still preyed upon my tortured heart.

The shame of having carried on a clandestine correspondence, with a lover, who had now so plainly cast me off, prevented my revealing to my mother any circumstance of a connection, which I then considered as disgraceful to me.—But I flew directly to Matilda, who had been my only confidant in this secret, and communicated the letter to her.—She received me coldly, as she had done before on my former difficulty — told me that this too was but another of the *common events of life*—That the most constant lovers were not to be considered more than *perennials*; but that Bath passions never lasted, beyond the season—that they

they were inſpired by the heat of the waters, and cooled as they did.

What makes girls ſo woe-begone, ſaid ſhe, upon ſuch diſappointments, is the overweaning conceit they are too apt to frame of their own conſequence; but they muſt abate conſiderably of their romantic ſelf-ſufficience, before they will find themſelves in the ſtation where nature has deſigned them.—A toy, a rattle, which ten will play with, for one who will think of becoming a ſerious purchaſer.

Such maxims as theſe, whether true or falſe, were not likely to aſſuage my grief, and I returned home the moſt unhappy creature breathing.—I accuſed Captain L—— of falſehood, of perjury,

a thouſand times, alas! in vain did I vow to caſt him from my heart and memory for ever.—Pardon, thou dear departed ſhade, theſe and all other injuries I have unwittingly been the ſad occaſion of to you!

During my confinement, Mr. W—— made the moſt conſtant and obliging inquiries about me, and in the moſt friendly manner offered my mother a houſe he had near the Hot-wells at Briſtol, with the uſe of his carriage, ſervants, &c.—As I continued in a very low and languid ſtate, even after my recovery, change of air was judged neceſſary for me, particularly as the phyſician who attended me, apprehended my falling into a conſumption.

I had,

I had, however, a very ſtrong objection to accepting Mr. W——'s obliging offer, from an unwillingneſs to receiving farther favours from one, to whom I was already too much indebted.

But this difficulty was a good deal obviated, by his declaring that he was engaged on a party, for two months, to viſit Paris; and during that time, both his houſe and carriage muſt be entirely uſeleſs to him.

At my mother's intreaty, and not oppoſed by me, Matilda conſented to accompany us; and I own I felt a gleam of joy, at removing from a place, where every object reminded me of my unhappineſs: I did not then reflect that I could not fly from myſelf, and that neither happineſs or miſery are local.

Mr. W—— accompanied us to Briſtol, and put us into poſſeſſion of a very elegant houſe, in which he left four ſervants to attend us, at board wages—There was an ample ſupply of tea, wine, ſweet-meats, and every elegance, which he inſiſted on our uſing, as if they were our own, and took his leave, in the politeſt manner, earneſtly requeſting that he might find us there at his return.

The waters and the change of ſcene certainly conduced to the recovery of my health; but peace and chearfulneſs were both eſtranged from my ſad boſom, and the only moments I enjoyed, were thoſe in which I could prevail on Matilda to liſten to my griefs.—I ſoon diſcovered that ſhe grew weary of the painful office; ſhe was totally immerſed in gaiety, and

uſed

uſed oftener to rally, than ſoothe my affliction.

Under all the diſadvantages, which the gloomy veil of ſorrow had caſt around me, a Yorkſhire baronet, Sir James D——, ſaw and liked me; he immediately addreſſed himſelf to my mother, and was by her moſt favourably received. She was overjoyed at the proſpect, of what ſhe called my happineſs, and ſpoke to me of Sir James's propoſal with tranſport.

This was the ſecond *outrage*, if I may ſo call it, that my heart had ſuffered— I fell into an agony of grief, and before I could recollect myſelf, or ſhe prevent me, I vowed to heaven, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that I would never be Sir James's wife.

Even at this moment, Edward, I behold the figure of my aſtoniſhed, my offended mother! She had, however, ſo much reaſon at command, as not to urge my madneſs farther, but quitted the room with a look of indignation, mingled with ſurpriſe and ſorrow.

In a few minutes I followed her into her chamber, aud found her in tears; I could not bear them, Edward! I fell upon my knees before her, implored her pardon, and offered even to ſacrifice my, ſelf by marrying Sir James D——, rather than render her wretched.

She anſwered with the utmoſt calmneſs, I fear, Maria, it is out of your power to prevent my being ſo; you are unhappy, my child, and I muſt ſuffer with

with you—I hope—but it is over—For be aſſured that after the vow you have ſo raſhly made, no power on earth ſhould force me to conſent to my child's perjury. Sir James ſhall have his anſwer.

But let me now inform you of a ſecret I wiſhed to have concealed for ever from you — Penury and want ſurround us, and we ſhall ſoon be given up a prey to them—We muſt return to Bath, no more. I will mortgage our little income, to pay our debts; in ſome obſcure corner we muſt labour for our bread, help to ſupport ourſelves in honeſt indigence, and ſtrive to humble our minds to our conditions.

I do not condemn you, my child—Affections are not to be forced—I flattered

myſelf

myſelf that your youth and beauty might have obtained an advantageous match, which would have been a ſupport to me, and an eſtabliſhment to yourſelf. Sir James D——'s propoſal was beyond my hopes but I do not wiſh to render you a victim for my ſake; nor ſhall this ſubject ever be mentioned more between us.'

O, my brother! think what I ſuffered while my mother ſpoke—I would at that moment have died a thouſand deaths to have made her happy; yet even then I inwardly rejoiced at being relieved from my apprehenſions of marrying a man I could not love.

You may ſuppoſe I uttered all that gratitude could dictate, for my mother's kindneſs, and promiſed, for my future

life, to know no will but hers—Talked of contented poverty; preferred an humble lot with peace of mind, to ſplendid miſery; and ſtrove in vain to combat with her ſorrows.

On this occaſion, I not only aſſumed, but felt a degree of chearfulneſs, to which my heart had long been a ſtranger. I triumphed over Captain L——'s unjuſt ſuſpicions; in the midſt of poverty, I rejected an advantageous ſettlement, and deſpiſed a title which muſt be bought at the expence of love.

I expected Matilda would have applauded my heroiſm, but was diſappointed—She diſapproved my conduct, called me romantic and abſurd, condemned my mother's want of ſpirit, and ſaid that

had ſhe been in her place ſhe would have compelled me to marry Sir James D—, and made me happy in ſpite of my own folly.—

In about four days after this event, Mr. W——, whom we had imagined to be in France, returned to Briſtol—As I was ſenſible of the higheſt gratitude towards him, I confeſs I felt a degree of pleaſure at his arrival, and received him with all the marks of regard due to a friend.

There was a vacant apartment in the houſe, which he aſked my mother's leave to occupy—ſhe certainly had not a right to refuſe, yet I could perceive that ſhe was vaſtly embarraſſed by the requeſt.—The next morning ſhe told me that ſhe

was determined to quit Briſtol, immediately, though ſhe knew not where to bend her courſe, as ſhe did not think it proper to remain longer in Mr. W——'s houſe.

As this perſon was near fifty years of age, I had never conſidered him in any other light than as a father; however, the impropriety of living under his roof, any longer, ſtruck me as ſoon as it was mentioned—I told her I was ready to attend her, when and wherever ſhe pleaſed.—She burſt into tears, and ſaid, "Alas, my child, who will receive the "friendleſs widow, and her helpleſs or-"phan!"

At that inſtant Mr. W——, who had overheard our diſcourſe, came into the room,

room, and taking my mother's hand, ſaid, "Behold in me, Madam, a pro-
"tector, and a ſon, who will think him-
"ſelf happy in making you ſo."

The firſt emotion of my heart, at this declaration, was gratitude — Modeſty alone reſtrained me from embracing Mr. W——; I cried out, in an extaſy, "O
"Sir! you are too good, too generous!
"how ſhall we ever be able to make you
"an amends?"

He inſtantly replied, "It is in your
"power, Madam, to overpay all my ſer-
"vices; I aſk no more than that fair hand
"can give; but then your heart, as well
"as perſon muſt be mine; without the
"firſt, the latter would be worthleſs—I
"will not at this moment expect your an-
"ſwer, you are fully appriſed of your

" mother's ſentiments and ſituation, and
" you alone can tell whether you chuſe
" or not to dry her tears."

He quitted the room directly, but he might have remained there, and talked for an hour, without hazarding any interruption from me; I was abſolutely petrified with horror and ſurpriſe—Before I could recover myſelf, my mother, with her eyes ſtill ſtreaming, threw herſelf on her knees before me, and preſſing my hand to her heart, ſaid, " I do not
" aſk you, my beloved child, to ſacri-
" fice yourſelf for me—but, O conſider,
" my Maria! to what inſults and misfor-
" tunes your innocence and youth muſt
" be expoſed, when you ſhall loſe even
" the poor ſupport you have in me—I
" know I cannot long endure diſtreſs,
" my

"my death muſt leave you a prey to "every ill, to every danger. You will "then reflect, with grief and ſhame, on "that falſe delicacy that actuates you "now, and vainly lament the loſs of a "fond parent, whom you have ſuffered "to ſink with ſorrow to the grave."

I could bear no more—I fell on my knees before her, I claſped her in my arms, and bathed her boſom with my flowing tears, while I cried out, "O take "me, ſacrifice me, do what you will with "me, I will not be a parricide! But "give me time to conquer this poor "heart, and tear my L——'s much "loved image from my breaſt."

At the name of L— my mother ſtarted up, and raiſed me with her; then

looking at me with unutterable anguiſh, ſaid it muſt not be, if your heart feels a paſſion for another object, I will much ſooner die than make you wretched.—But who is Mr. L—, and how has he deſerved Maria's love?—Shame kept me ſilent; but when my mother repeated her queſtion, I replied, do not preſs me farther, Madam; Matilda can inform you both of my weakneſs and misfortune.

As I wiſhed to retire upon the inſtant, I opened a door that led by a few ſteps into the garden,—I my confuſion I miſſed my footing, and feel from the top to the bottom.—My mother flew to my aſſiſtance, but could not raiſe me; ſhe called for help, and when Matilda and Mr. W—, who were in the garden, lifted me from the ground, I could not

ſtand.—

ſtand.—I was carried into the houſe, and a ſurgeon ſent for, who acquainted them that I had diſlocated my right ancle.

In the midſt of the pain I ſuffered, even during the action of ſetting my ancle, I ſecretly rejoiced in this accident, as it muſt, at leaſt for ſome days, retard an event to me more horrible than death. —My heart was overflowing ſtill with fondneſs for the faithleſs L——, and I was ſenſible of *too much reſpect* for Mr. W——, to love him.

The ſecond day of my confinement, my mother told me that Matilda had informed her of every particular relative to the attachment between Captain L—— and me; and tho' ſhe conſidered it as a childiſh and romantic affair on my ſide,

and a mere matter of galantry on his; yet her tenderneſs for me, had made her conſent to Matilda's writing to him, and acquainting him with every particular of my preſent ſituation; and if, in anſwer to that letter, he ſhould declare a ſerious and honourable paſſion for me, ſhe ſolemnly promiſed never to oppoſe my inclination, but chearfully wait his return, and yield her conſent to our union, but if, on the contrary——

Stop there, my deareſt mother, I exclaimed, you have outgone my wiſhes; for if Captain L—— ſhould heſitate a moment to receive me as his wife, not only my hand, but my heart ſhall then be free; and gratitude to the beſt of parents ſhall enable me to beſtow them, unreluctantly, on any perſon whom her prudence ſhall ſelect.

My

My mother embraced me, and bathed my cheeks with tears of fondneſs. At that moment I thought myſelf the happieſt of mortals.—Matilda joined us, and read the letter ſhe had written to Captain L——. I did not think that it ſufficiently deſcribed either my affection or my diſtreſs; but as my mother approved of it, I did not preſume to make any objection, but only engaged her promiſe to add a defence of my conduct, from the miſapprehenſions or miſrepreſentations he ſeemed to have conceived or received before, with regard to it.

You know, my Edward, that my mother was integrity itſelf; ſhe could not therefore bear to be guilty of the ſmalleſt deceit; and though Mr. W——had not preſſed for any anſwer to his pro-

posal, on account of the accident that had happened to me, she resolved to tell him that there was a friend in America, without whose consent I was determined never to marry; that this person had been written to, and that he should be informed of his answer, the moment it arrived.

Mr. W—— received this information with a very ill grace, but acquiesced so far as to say, that he could have no doubt of this *unheard of* guardian's consent to such an offer as his; and as an answer might arrive before I was perfectly restored to my health, there was no great harm in asking it; but he did not suppose that we should be weak enough to refuse his alliance, even though this particular friend might not approve of it.

My

My mother, though extremely disgusted at the roughness of his reply, concealed the coarseness of his expression from me, and I considered myself extremely obliged to him for not persecuting me any further, for the present, with his ungracious and unwelcome passion.

Matilda was obliged to return to her house at Bath; and as my mother spent most of her time in my chamber, and that Mr. W—— was not permitted to make long visits to me, on pretence of the necessity of my being kept quiet, he grew weary of passing his domestic hours alone, and to my very great joy, set out for London.

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I have

I have written ſo long, my dear Louiſa, that I am ſcarce able to hold the pen, but I could not poſſibly ſtop in this intereſting narrative, ſuch I hope you will think it, till I came to what may properly be called a reſting place—For though we do not leave Maria happy, her hopes and fears are held in equipoiſe, and this perhaps may not be one of the leaſt eligible ſituations in human life.

Since I wrote to you I have had a letter from Mrs. Walter, my apprehenſions for her life are increaſed by it; they more than preponderate againſt my hopes, my ſpirits ſink with them—But I am in a gloomy mood, at preſent; I will try to ſhake it off; Lord Hume will aſſiſt me, I hear him coming up ſtairs—Till to-morrow, farewell, my loved Louiſa.

F. CLEVELAND.

LETTER LXIII.

Miſs CLEVELAND to Lady BARTON.

I Shall proceed in my taſk of copying, like a clerk in an office, without attending to any thing but the draft before me, and indeed, my Louiſa, I find it ſufficiently intereſting to engroſs all my attention.—If it can exclude thoſe pleaſing ſentiments which my preſent happineſs ought, and does inſpire, may I not reaſonably hope that it will be able to ſuſpend, at leaſt during the time of reading it, that heavy weight which ſeems to preſs upon my ſiſter's heart? Yes, I am perſuaded that it may, and under this belief, I reaſſume the pen.

The

The STORY *of* MARIA, *continued.*

In less than a month, I was able to walk, with a little help, and most earnestly wished to quit Mr. W——'s house; as I had reason to hope from the justification of my character, which Matilda assured me she had undertaken, that there would be an end of all connection between us, the moment I should receive a letter from Captain L——; and that an interview, on such an occasion, must be painful to us both.

I therefore pressed my mother to try to borrow the money she wanted, at Bristol, and return to Bath —She complied with my request, and judged it necessary to take up a larger sum, on her annuity, than she at first intended, as either my marriage with Mr. W——, or my waiting Captain L——'s return to England, must be attended with expence.

In

In ſhort, on ſuch terms as the poor borrow, and the rich lend, ſhe obtained two hundred pounds, which I then thought an immenſe ſum; but did not conſider that we owed more than half of it already, including my debt to Mr. W——.

I am thus circumſtantial with you, my dear Edward, that you may be perfectly able to judge of the motives which impelled me to my ruin—O would to heaven, that I alone had been to ſuffer the ſo much dreaded ills of poverty! I would have braved them all; but a beloved, and tender parent, whoſe fondneſs towards me had involved her in diſtreſs! It was not to be born.

My mother wrote a very polite letter to Mr. W——, thanking him for all his civilities,

civilities, and acquainting him with our return to Bath, where he joined us in a few days—He brought ſome very handſome jewels, and other preſents, from London, for me, which I abſolutely refuſed, and even felt my delicacy offended at his offering them, as it ſeemed to hint at a certainty of my becoming his wife.

As the time approached when we might expect an anſwer from Captain L——, I counted the hours, and rejoiced in their flight; the anxiety of ſuſpence was viſible in my looks and words; I ſtarted at every ſound, and minutely inquired the buſineſs of every perſon who rapped at the door. At length the fatal moment arrived that was to change a ſtate of fond hope into the utmoſt deſpair.

Matilda

Matilda came to our houſe one morning, and requeſted to ſee my mother alone; the gloom which ſat on her brow, announced the tidings which ſhe brought, and though ſcarce able to utter a ſyllable, I cried out, "I will not leave the room, "I know the worſt already, he is dead!" She anſwered coldly, no! and reached a letter to me—the contents whereof were as follow—

To Matilda.

Dear Madam,

Honoured as I am by the favour of your letter, and happy in hearing of your health, will you not think me ungrateful if I repine at your waſting ſo much of your time and paper, in relating particulars of a perſon, who now only lives in my memory, from the bare recollection

tion of having ſometimes ſeen her with you?

But as all preferences are flattering, I ſhould be unpolite not to thank miſs S——, for an offer, which I muſt however decline. I heartily wiſh her happineſs with Sir James D——, Mr. W——, or whomſoever elſe ſhe ſhall think proper to honour with her fair hand, excepting, Madam, your

your obedient ſervant,

T. L.

My faculties were all ſuſpended, for ſeveral minutes, after reading this inſulting letter—

"No ſigh to riſe, no tear had power to flow."

I felt like one that had been ſtunned by a ſevere ſtroke—At length recovering myſelf,

myſelf, I flung the hated paper from me, and taking my mother's hand, ſaid, with an effort of calmneſs, "How poor, "Madam, is the ſacrifice that I can now "make to duty—A rejected hand, and "heart! but diſpoſe of them as you "pleaſe, and do it quickly, while my "reaſon holds."

My mother was more alarmed at my behaviour than ſhe would have been had I fallen into a paſſion, either of grief or rage—She wept abundantly, for my diſtreſs, and expreſſed every ſentiment of parental fondneſs—her kindneſs would have transformed me to a Niobe at any other time, but the ſorrow that had then taken poſſeſſion of my heart, was of too powerful a nature to be ſoftened by her tears, or diſſipated by my own—'Twas grief unutterable.

My

My mother kindly indulged me, for ſeveral days, by allowing me to keep my chamber, on pretence of a ſore throat—this prevented my ſeeing Mr. W——, and gave me time to reflect upon my own ſituation.—I conſidered myſelf as an offering that was to be ſacrificed, and determined to ſupport the rôle that fate had allotted me, with becoming fortitude.

Mr. W—— expreſſed the utmoſt impatience for our marriage, and in about ſix weeks after the receipt of Captain L——'s letter, I was led to the altar, and became the wretched wife of Mr. W——.

In vain did I endeavour to aſſume an air of chearfulneſs, with a breaking heart; unuſed to deceit or artifice, the veil which

which I put on could not conceal the gloomy tints which ſorrow had engraven upon my mind. I was hourly reproached by my huſband with ill temper and ingratitude, and my mother was accuſed of having drawn him into a match, ſo much againſt his intereſt, and ſo little conducive to his happineſs.

For her dear ſake, I exerted my utmoſt powers to pleaſe, but they ſeldom met with ſucceſs; and I, with unſpeakable grief, now ſaw that ſhe was rendered infinitely more wretched by my marriage, than ſhe could have been in any other ſituation.

Mr. W——'s eſtate was in Devonſhire; he had an old family ſeat there, where I moſt earneſtly wiſhed to ſpend

my

my days in ſolitude and peace; but as he often told me, that he did not think we ſhould make a pleaſant *tête-a-tête* together there, he diſpoſed of his houſe at Briſtol, and hired one at Bath, from which he frequently made excurſions to London, or elſe-where, for a month or ſix weeks at a time.

During his abſence, I ſeldom ſtirred abroad, unleſs to church, to pay ſome viſit of ceremony, or to paſs an hour, or perhaps an evening, with Matilda.

From the moment I was married I had never mentioned the name of Captain L—— to my mother, Matilda, or any other perſon—This was a ſacrifice I thought due to my huſband; I would have done more, had it been in my power,

power, and banifhed him for ever from my thoughts.

One evening, while Mr. W—— was away, I was prevailed upon, by Matilda and my mother, to go to the Rooms, on a ball-night—I found my ſpirits ſtrongly affected with a ſcene that reminded me of happier days; and became ſo much abſorbed in my own reflections, that I ſcarce heard the ſound of the muſic, or obſerved the motion of the dancers, though Matilda was among them.

I was ſitting on one of the benches, oppoſite the door of the room, and had continued a conſiderable time in my reverie, when my eyes were accidentally caught by the figure of a perſon, who was ſpeaking to a lady that ſat juſt be-

fore me—My mind hesitated, but my heart admitted not a doubt that it was Captain L——.

Had I ever screamed out in my life, I should have done so then—So unexpected a view had the same effect on me that is generally produced by thunder and lightning; it dimmed my sight, and gave me such a sickness in my stomach that I could not long support; a sudden chilness succeeded this emotion, and my head reclined insensibly on the shoulder of the lady who sat next to me.

What passed while I remained in that state, I know not, but when my senses returned, I found myself at home, my mother weeping by me, and Mr. W— storming about the room like a mad-

man

man—not at my illneſs, but the cauſe he imputed it to—for he declared, before the ſurgeon who had juſt then bled me, that he had detected me in an intrigue; and that on his ſudden and unexpected appearance, in the Rooms, at the moment I was conferring with my galant, the various paſſions of love, hatred, and fear, had overpowered my ſpirits, and occaſioned my fainting.

What an infatuated diſtemper is jealouſy! it realiſes chimeras, and draws concluſions, without premiſes — I was holding no conference with Captain L— he was only ſpeaking to a perſon who ſat before me, nor did I ſee my huſband, till I opened my eyes in my own chamber. However I ſuffered him to pour forth his whole ſtock of cauſeleſs abuſe with-

out the leaſt interruption; till at length, not meeting with reſiſtance, his rage was exhauſted, and the ſurgeon and he retired together.

I was put into bed, and determined, as ſoon as I was left alone, to tear the bandage off my arm, and ſuffer myſelf to bleed to death; but before I could put my reſolution in practice, a thouſand reaſons preſſed forward to reſtrain my trembling hand—What had I done to merit death? Would not the deſperate deed confirm the ſlander of my tyrant's tongue? And could I leave my mother at once oppreſſed with her own grief, and my infamy!

Perhaps the love of life pleaded, though ſilently, even ſtronger than theſe motives,

motives, and with-held me from my firſt attempt towards guilt—Yet, O forgive me, Edward, that I now lament I did not perpetrate the fatal deed! I might have hoped for pardon of my firſt crime, but can accumulated ſins find mercy! Yet if contrition may avail a wretch, I ſtill will dare to hope.

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Here, my Louiſa, I muſt again break off my melancholy narrative, as I have been ſo much broken in upon, all day, by company, that I find it impoſſible to conclude it by this poſt; but as the mails to Ireland are ſometimes delayed by contrary winds, for ſeveral days, nay weeks, as I am told, you may poſſibly receive the whole ſtory at once—I will

not therefore create a further interruption by talking on any other ſubject, but conclude as uſual,

moſt affectionately yours,

F. CLEVELAND.

LETTER LXVI.

Miſs CLEVELAND to Lady BARTON.

ONCE more, my ſiſter, I return to the ſad taſk of relating Maria's woes; I have not ventured to make any comment on her ſtory, nor do I mean to attempt it: my Louiſa can reaſon far better than I, and deduce effects from their cauſes.

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The

The agitation of my ſpirits had reduced my mind to a ſtate of the loweſt weakneſs: I wept the whole night through, and when my mother came to my bed-ſide, in the morning, I was ſcarce able to anſwer her tender inquiries after my health.

She told me that Mr. W——— was perfectly well acquainted with my former attachment to Captain L——, though he had never given the moſt diſtant hint of it before—She ſuſpected Matilda for having ſupplied him with this information—That by ſome chance he had heard of his being at Bath, and came poſt from London, directly; but when he arrived at his houſe, and heard that I was at the Rooms, he flew into the moſt violent paſſion, and ſaid every thing

againſt me that rage and miſtake could dictate.

My poor mother thought to qualify his fury, by aſſuring him that this was the firſt night I had gone into the Rooms, ſince his abſence—Perhaps this might have confirmed his ſuſpicion, as it looked the more like an aſſignation. He hurried on his cloaths, flew immediately to the aſſembly, and happened unluckily, it ſeems, juſt to enter the door as Captain L—— had walked up to the place where I ſat.

He conſtrued every thing againſt me, both appearances and ſurmiſes—"Tri-"fles light as air," &c. In fine I was condemned, without further examination, he declared his full determination

not

not to live with me any longer, and commanded me to ſet out immediately for his houſe in Devonſhire, where he would take care that I ſhould not expoſe myſelf, or diſhonour him, any more for the future.

Surely never was reprieve more welcome to a ſentenced wretch, than the latter part of this diſcourſe to me—I had languiſhed for ſolitude, before my huſband's error had rendered me infamous; and earneſtly wiſhed to fly from ſociety, before I had reaſon to apprehend that I ſhould be abandoned by the world—But in my preſent ſituation, both of mind and circumſtance, the idea of retirement, nay abſolute ſecluſion from the whole univerſe, except my mother, was doubly dear to my ſad heart.

I ſtarted up with all the alacrity of health, and chearfulneſs, and cried, I am ready to obey Mr. W——; let us be gone this moment, do not delay, my deareſt mother, but let us fly for ever from this hated place, this ſcene of all my miſery!

She anſwered with a ſigh, "Your "huſband has refuſed to let me go with "you, or be a witneſs of the treatment, "which you are too likely to receive un-"der his tyranny—I ſhall behold you, or "your miſeries, no more; but they will "prey for ever on my heart—for I have "cauſed them all—Your filial duty, more "than your own ambition, was the ſole "motive which has rendered you a victim "to this unequal match—I reſpected the "opinions of the world, more than the

"philosophy of nature, and the sin of "the parent is now severely visited on "the unoffending child!"—We wept in each other's bosom.

The thought of being separated from this virtuous, this tender parent, quite overpowered me, and I sunk almost senseless upon my pillow—I knew that she had not now even the means of subsistence, when torn from me, and I had not the least reason to expect that Mr. W—— would have generosity or humanity sufficient to relieve her distress, or assuage her grief.

During the few days I remained at Bath, after this event, I never stirred out of my bed-chamber, nor saw any creature, except my dear mother and a maid

ſervant, who had been hired upon this occaſion, to watch, rather than attend me, and was appointed, as one may well ſuppoſe, to be a ſpy upon all my actions during my exilement in Devonſhire.

The only favourable circumſtance that I remember, in this unhappy ſituation, was that Mr. W——, for I will no longer ſtyle him huſband, no more diſtreſſed me with his loathſome preſence, or his foul reproaches, while I continued under his roof.

Matilda never once came near me all this while; but this was not the firſt inſtance that gave me reaſon to ſuſpect her of inſincerity and double dealing. I feared ſhe had been the ſole cauſe of the breach between Captain L——

and

and me, and this idea not only inſpired me with my former paſſion for him, but added a tenderneſs and compaſſion to my ſentiments, that rendered me infinitely more wretched than I was before: the brutality of Mr. W—— ſtill further ſtrengthened my affections towards him, and the ſtate of divorce to which his violence had now reduced me, diſſolved that ſolemn and honourable tie, which would otherwiſe have reſtrained the wanderings of my heart, and ever preſerved my duty faithful to him.

It would be impoſſible to deſcribe the pangs I felt, when the hour arrived in which I was to be torn from a fond mother's converſe—ſhe was all the world to me, at leaſt ſhe was all that I then thought truly loved me, in the world—

We

We parted—and at her moſt earneſt entreaty, I promiſed to write to Mr. W—, as ſoon as my mind ſhould be ſufficiently compoſed, and to enter into a proper vindication of my hitherto irreproachable conduct.

More dead than alive, my duenna and I arrived at my deſtined priſon—The houſe was old, large, and gloomy, extremely out of repair; the furniture as antique as the building, which was ſituated on a bleak and barren ſhore, oppoſite the Iriſh coaſt.—For the firſt ten or twelve days that I paſſed in this diſmal manſion, I was delighted with the ſtillneſs and ſolitude that ſurrounded me—the family was compoſed of only three maids, and an old gardener; and I have ſometimes paſſed a dozen hours with-

without hearing any ſound, except the roaring of the ſea, the croaking of the ravens, or howling of a maſtiff.

But when the agitation of my mind began a little to ſubſide, I grew ſenſible to the horrors of my ſituation, and would have preferred a dungeon, with any human creature I could converſe with, to the liberty of ſtalking through an uninhabited range of chambers, in ſilence and ſolitude.

Monaſteries afford ſociety, and goals are not deſtitute of companions, which are a ſolace even in miſery; but here I was both wretched, and alone—I uſed often to conſider myſelf as a delinquent entombed alive, ſecluded from the univerſe, and only conſcious of exiſtence from continued regret.

I ſought for amuſement in books, and found none that were capable of affording me any; the few volumes that I met with, were meant to inſpire devotion, but as they were written on fanatical principles, they were either ſo ridiculouſly abſurd as to create diſguſt, or ſo extremely rigid as to induce deſpair.

In conformity to my promiſe, I had written to Mr. W——, but received no anſwer, and, what was infinitely more grievous to me, I had not the happineſs of hearing once from my mother, or any one elſe, though eight months had lagged with leaden ſteps along, ſince the firſt day of my confinement.

When the weather permitted, I ſometimes walked by the ſea ſide, and have frequently

frequently poured forth my ſorrows to the deaf, unpitying waves.—Often, my Edward, have I ſighed out your name, and ſent forth ardent prayers for your return, to comfort and ſupport our hapleſs mother! Yet I will own that the loved ſound of L——, ſtill oftener paſſed my lips—Was this a crime? My affections were thrown back upon my hands, and this methought gave me a right to transfer them.

In this ſituation I had remained in my exile for a tedious interval, when one fine evening, having indulged my reveries by the ſea ſide longer than uſual, the twilight coming on warned me of returning home, when I ſaw two men, at a ſmall diſtance, walking ſlowly behind me—a ſight ſo unuſual, joined to an apprehenſion

prehenſion that they might have overheard my ſoliloquy, put my ſpirits into a flutter; though from their pace and manner, they did not ſeem as if they intended to purſue me—I was ſeized with an univerſal tremor, my limbs could ſcarce ſupport me, and I could march but ſlowly on.

Before I was able to recover myſelf, and mend my ſpeed, one of the perſons came up to me, while the other retired, as if for fear of alarming me—I did not venture even to look at him, and began to mend my pace; but ſight was uſeleſs, when his well known voice uttered theſe words, "O fear no injury from me, my "dear deceived, unhappy, and ſtill ador-"ed Maria!"

Surpriſe,

Surprise, terror, hope, fear, love, anger, grief, and joy—in short every passion of the human heart, hatred alone excepted, rushed through my mind, and totally deprived me of the power of utterance, while he—need I write his name?—taking advantage of my silence, proceeded thus.

"I have long sought this opportunity "of speaking to you; but my tender-"ness, my delicacy, and respect, for the "only woman I ever did, or can love, "have prevented my attempting it hi-"therto, in any way that might reflect "upon the character of Mr. W——'s "wife, and by that means countenance "and justify the calumny with which he "has aspersed your reputation—The "lucky moment I have so long watched

"for

"for in private, has at length arrived,
"and if you ever loved me, my Maria,
"you will not now refuſe to hear me,
"for a moment, while I tell you that
"you have been moſt cruelly deceived."

"I know it, Sir, I replied; you need
"not now inform me of your own per-
"fidy—to you alone I owe the miſeries
"I ſuffer, and Mr. W—— himſelf is
"innocent, when compared with you—
"Then let me go this moment, for how-
"ever my duty to him may have been
"diſſolved, by his unkindneſs, that
"which I owe myſelf, forbids my ever
"holding converſe with you more."

I attempted to break from him, but he held me faſt, and vowed moſt ſolemnly, that he would never quit me, unleſs

I promiſed

I promiſed to meet him, the next evening, on the beach, and allow him to exculpate himſelf of the infidelity I charged him with, and which he then denied with the ſtrongeſt aſſeverations; adding, that Matilda had betrayed us both, and was the vileſt being upon earth—Then promiſed, if I would but hear him once, he would never importune me more.

Almoſt diſtracted with contending paſſions, and terrified leſt his imprudence might involve me in farther difficulties, I promiſed to comply with his requeſt, provided he would leave me on the inſtant, as I heard the ſound of voices, which I knew to be the ſervants coming in queſt of me, as they muſt neceſſarily be alarmed at my unuſual ſtay—He preſſed my hand to his lips, and withdrew directly.

With trembling ſteps I purſued my way homewards, and met my maid, with the gardener, coming in ſearch of me—The agitation of my mind, was too viſible in my countenance to paſs unnoticed, and they naturally inquired if I had met with any fright or accident? I told them that the night had fallen upon me ſooner than I had expected it, that I had been then alarmed at the loneliness of my ſituation, and the haſte I was obliged to make homewards had hurried my ſpirits a little—I deſired a glaſs of water, and pretended to retire to reſt.

As ſoon as I was left alone, I began to reflect upon the extraordinarineſs of my adventure with Captain L—— upon the ſtrand, and on my own weakneſs in having conſented again to meet a per-

ſon

ſon who had deſpiſed and rejected me with the utmoſt inſolence and inhumanity.

It was however, ſtill eaſier to account for my conduct, on this occaſion, than for his; paſſion, ſelf-love, and curioſity, all conſpired to render me deſirous of finding a clue to that labyrinth in which I was involved. But wherefore ſhould he ſeek to diſtreſs me farther? Or why purſue a wretch, who, already intirely ſecluded from the world, had neither inclination or power to diſturb his happineſs, or oppoſe his views in any ſcheme of life?

The hints he had dropped about Matilda, puzzled me ſtill farther — Was ſhe not the companion of my youth, the friend of my heart, the confidant of all my

my joys and ſorrows—Some inſtances of her levity and unkindneſs I did indeed recollect—But could ſhe betray me! impoſſible! Nature could not produce ſo vile a monſter!

Or grant there could be ſuch a fiend cloathed in a female form—Yet ſtill why unprovoked ſhould ſhe exert her malice againſt me, who never had offended her, without a view to her own intereſt or advantage? And how could ſhe be profited by my deſtruction?

The more I conſidered what Captain L—— had ſaid, on this laſt ſubject, the leſs credit it gained with me; and I perſuaded myſelf that he had only named Matilda as a lure to my curioſity.—The night paſſed away inſenſibly, without my being able either to form any rational

tional conjecture, with regard to the motives of his behaviour, or any resolution relative to my own—A thousand times I determined not to keep my appointment with him, and as often changed my resolves.

It would be endless to repeat the numberless arguments for, and against this meeting, that my love and reason suggested, and set in opposition to each other.—At length my evil genius prevailed, and determined me, *for once*, to hear what Captain L—— could say.

About six o'clock in the morning, I lay down on my bed, in order to make my maid believe that I had slept in it as usual; I had lain but a short time, when I found my harrassed mind inclined

to reſt, and I fell into a ſlumber; out of which I was ſoon awakened by a dream, which affected my mind as much as a viſion would have done my ſenſes.

I thought that my father ſtood before me, under the ſame ſickly and emaciated appearance, with which that true divine conferred his laſt bleſſing on me—I threw myſelf on my knees, and endeavoured to embrace his; but with his face averſe he flitted faſt away—I roſe and purſued him to the brink of a precipice, when he turned quick upon me, caught me up in his arms, and plunged with me directly into the gulph.

I awakened with a loud ſcream, thought I was ſtill falling, and was for ſome time in doubt whether it was the reverie of a

diſturbed

diſturbed brain, or an apparition that had occurred to me; and only determined it to have been the former, by finding myſelf in the ſame place I had laid down to reſt.

I roſe up and walked about the room, till I had exhauſted my ſtrength, endeavouring to ſhake off the kind of horror which had taken poſſeſſion of my mind and body, from this ſhocking dream; but it clung ſtill about me, like a wintry cloud, and chilled my nerves to numbneſs.

At length, towards evening, I began to recover myſelf again—I am not ſuperſtitious; beſides, what crime had I ever committed, that might conjure up ſpectres from the grave! My life had been

innocent, though unhappy, and my mind continued pure, though injured and provoked.

The reflections which this incident ſtirred up in my thoughts, more particularly at this time, with regard to my dear father's goodneſs and virtue, ſerved principally to compoſe my ſpirits to peace—He was indeed a perfect chriſtian, both in faith and works; his character and converſation were of a piece; his example was precept, he urged no borrowed morals, but preached the very practice of his life—his doctrines were ſtrict, yet indulgent; charitable, though ſevere—his auſterity was only in his maxims and his mind; his mildneſs in his cenſures and his heart.

Theſe

Theſe pious thoughts wrought me up to an enthuſiaſm of devotion; I fell on my knees to thank Heaven for having been derived from two ſuch pure ſources, as my father and mother, and prayed moſt fervently, that I might never be guilty of any thought or deed, which ſhould render me unworthy of ſuch faultleſs originals.

As the hour approached when I was to meet Captain L——, the terrors of my mind increaſed; yet I found myſelf ſo ſtrongly impelled, from the motives already mentioned, joined to a curioſity to know where the blame lay, between Matilda and him, that I could not reſiſt the temptation of hazarding the interview. I went ſoftly down the back ſtairs, which led from a cloſet within my apartment,

and found my way out, unſeen by any of the family.

The agitation of my ſpirits was ſo violent, that I ſcarce knew what I did; I ſometimes ran towards the ſhore, as if I had been purſued by wild beaſts; then ſtopped, and ſtood motionleſs, as if my faculties had ceaſed.—At length, I perceived Captain L——, at ſome diſtance; he flew to me, and caught me in his arms; I burſt into a paſſion of tears, and was incapable of utterance.

As ſoon as I could recover my ſpeech, I aſſumed all the dignity of reſentment, and told him that he was no longer to conſider me as the weak tender Maria S——, but as an injured and offended judge, who came to hear the poor de-

fence

fence which he could make, for having ſo ungenerouſly wronged, and ſo cruelly injured her.

Again he preſſed me to his boſom, and exclaimed, "O could I but repair the "wrongs you have ſuffered, as eaſily as "I can prove I never was the author of "them, my loved Maria ſhould be mine "and happy—and it ſhall ſtill be ſo— "Victims of artifice and fraud, ſhall we "continue to be wretched, becauſe Ma- "tilda and your huſband have concur- "red to render us ſo!"

"That fatal name of huſband, I replied, "has fixed an everlaſting bar, between "happineſs and me; but were there no "ſuch perſon in the world, you cannot "think of me ſo meanly, to ſuppoſe that

"I would condeſcend to accept of one,
"who had rejected and deſpiſed me!—
"No blandiſhments, no arts, can ever
"ſoothe my tortured mind into forget-
"fulneſs of your contempt."

He then begged that I would hear him juſtify himſelf, and began by informing me, that about a year before my arrival at Bath, he had gone there, as moſt young people do, in queſt of amuſement; that he happened to lodge in the ſame houſe with Matilda, and her huſband, who both ſought and cultivated his acquaintance; and as he had no particular attachment to any other perſons there, he devoted himſelf intirely to them, was of all their parties, and never abſent from them.

He confeſſed that he liked Matilda, better than any woman then at Bath, and that

that he began to flatter himſelf he was not diſagreeable to her; from the levity of her manners, he had reaſon to believe ſhe was not overſtrict in her morals, and on her huſband's being obliged to go to London, for a few days, ſhe convinced him that he had not been miſtaken.

Their guilty commerce laſted but a ſhort time; it began without paſſion, and of courſe terminated in indifference, at leaſt on his ſide. He quitted Bath without any deſign of ever returning, though Matilda and her huſband had taken a houſe, and determined to fix their reſidence there.

Some months after, he was attacked with a violent bilious complaint, and ordered to Bath by his phyſicians; and

ſhe moſt wickedly repreſented to him as a vice of mine, and reported the circumſtances of my debt to Mr. W——, which ſhe alſo exaggerated, with ſuch reflections as placed me in the ſhocking light of a girl who was reſolved to make the moſt of her youth and beauty, without any further regard to morals or character.

In fine, he acknowledged that the plauſible manner in which ſhe gave him theſe advices, from time to time, with the tender and compaſſionate expreſſions ſhe affected now and then to let drop, upon the unhappineſs of my conduct, had at length ſo intirely injured me in his eſteem, that it occaſioned his writing me the letter, before mentioned, when he was going to ſet ſail for America.

What

What a recital was this for me to liſten to, in my then unfortunate circumſtances! his juſtification but increaſed my miſery—I had never imagined there was ſo much vileneſs in human nature, as the baſe Matilda appeared now to be capable of, and was ſhocked to think that I was of the ſame ſpecies with ſuch a monſter in wickedneſs—I wept—We both of us wept, while he thus went on with his ſtory.

"When I quitted Europe, continued he, the poiſon of Matilda's correſpondence having ceaſed its operations, my paſſion and reflection had liberty to exert themſelves, and I began to doubt the authenticity of the extraordinary accounts I had received about you——Your bloom

"and

" and beauty presented themselves to my
" fond imagination, in the warmest co-
" lours—Your candour, innocence, and
" ingenuousness of manners, occurred
" then strongly to my mind — Could
" such a character become so quickly
" abandoned, said I to my heart—It must
" be unnatural; and what is contrary to
" nature, must be improbable at least,
" if not impossible."

" Thus did I often plead your cause,
" my ever loved Maria, against the foul
" charges of your enemy, whom I un-
" happily, however, did not look upon
" then in that light, but merely as an
" unfortunate woman, who having been
" guilty of vice herself, was, as too
" generally is the case, apt to construe
" every action of others into the worst
" sense,

" ſenſe, that the appearances or circum-
" ſtances of it can bear.

" Upon this fair diſcuſſion of the
" point, I wrote once more to Matilda,
" expreſſing my doubts, not of her ſin-
" cerity, but about her miſapprehen-
" ſions only, of your conduct — Said
" that general charges, ſuſpicions, and
" hearſays, were but inſufficient evi-
" dences where ſo choice a jewel a cha-
" racter was at ſtake; and called upon
" her for ſome facts of more public noto-
" riety, to ſupport her ſlanders.

" As all correſpondence had been
" broken off between you and me, ſaid
" he, ſhe ventured now to ſpeak out
" more boldly, and without the leaſt
" equivocation in her terms, aſſured me
" that

"that you lived publicly with Mr.
"W——, and privately intrigued with
"Sir James D—; that the extravagance
"of your dreſs, pleaſures, and other ex-
"pences, was ſupported between them;
"that you had kept them both attached
"to you, by raiſing a ſpirit of rivalſhip
"between them; and uſed alſo to ren-
"der each of the galants jealous, in their
"turns, by alarming them with me.

"With the letter ſhe wrote, as ſhe
"ſaid by your deſire, from Briſtol, ſhe
"ſent me another, in which ſhe told
"me that you had at length brought
"Mr. W—— to conſent to marry you,
"on account of your being with child,
"and that the letter was framed with a
"view either of duping me into a mar-
"riage, which ſhe believed you would
"prefer,

"prefer, or of paying Mr. W—— the "compliment of ſacrificing me to him, "if I ſhould return a favourable anſwer.

"There is no deſcribing the height "of reſentment to which I was affected "upon this occaſion, and I ſhould have "replied to the propoſal in the moſt "outrageous terms imaginable, if my "love and fondneſs for you, which ſtill "remained, though my eſteem was flown, "had not reſtrained my hand, and dic-"tated thoſe cool, but not violent lines, "I ſent her in anſwer."

He told me, that when he returned to England, upon his father's illneſs, he felt himſelf impelled by a ſtrong deſire of ſeeking ſome proper opportunity of reproaching me for my infidelity, and of covering

covering me with the utmoſt confuſion, by expreſſing the deteſtation and contempt, that even a man, and a ſoldier, was capable of conceiving at the breach of honour or virtue in a woman that he loved.

He mentioned this purpoſe, he ſaid, in a letter to Matilda, and ſhe moſt ſtrenuouſly oppoſed it; ſhe told him that ſuch a ſentiment was no good ſign of a recovery from his infatuated paſſion, for ſhe feared much that "All the malice "of his heart was love." That this would be but affording me the triumph of thinking him ſtill my ſlave, and might put it in my power to involve him, perhaps, in a duel with Mr. W—, whom ſhe repreſented as extremely jealous, from very conſcious reaſons, if, as

it

it was more than probable, I ſhould be willing to exchange my wedding-garment for a widow's weed.

However all theſe arguments not being ſufficient to deter him from coming to Bath, he wrote her word that he would be there on ſuch a day, and has had reaſon to ſuppoſe, ſince, that ſhe muſt have adviſed Mr. W—— of this particular, by his coming ſo critically from London, on the ſame day, and meeting him in the Rooms that fatal night which I have before mentioned to you.

I need not now, my dear brother, recapitulate what paſſed, in conſequence of this vile woman's malice; you have hitherto ſeen me the *innocent* victim of her cruelty—Too happy ſhould I now deem myſelf, had I ſtill remained ſo.

My

My fainting in the Rooms, at the ſight of Captain L——, awakened his former tenderneſs for me; and the inhumanity with which Mr. W— treated me, on that occaſion, for the ſurgeon had made the ſtory public, ſeemed to demand his pity for a wretch doomed to be puniſhed for an involuntary and guiltleſs act.

He would have gone in perſon, the next morning, to Mr. W——, in order to have juſtified my character, as far as it related to the ſcandal then caſt upon it, with regard to him, but was reſtrained from the attempt by Matilda's ſaying that this would only make the matter worſe, in all probability; that the interfering between man and wife was a dangerous meaſure in any perſon whatſoever,

ever, but that the lover, the very cauſe of the contention, muſt certainly be the moſt improper mediator in their reconcilement, that could poſſibly be imagined.

She, therefore, adviſed him to wait with patience, till paſſion, on the huſband's part, might become calm enough to liſten to reaſon, and that reſentment peculiarly natural to a wife, *ſuſpected in the wrong place*, (this was her expreſſion) ſhould have ſomewhat ſubſided, and then promiſed him to undertake the interpoſition herſelf, at the proper criſis, probably to better effect than it could be engaged in, even by her, during the preſent violence of the parties.

He ſtayed at Bath while I remained there, and ſuffered an anxiety which increaſed

creaſed more and more, every day, as by mixing with the company at the Rooms, but more particularly with the reſidents of the place, among whom my late adventure was publicly talked of, he heard every one take my part, and vindicate my innocence, from their former knowledge and general good opinion of my character and conduct, ever ſince I had firſt become an inhabitant of that city.

In fine, he heard it agreed upon, on all ſides, that Mr. W— could have no other foundation for his jealouſy of me, except that ſort of ſuſpicion which is naturally apt to ariſe from too great a diſparity in years, eſpecially in the breaſt of a man, who had had but little acquaintance with any women, except thoſe of profligate character.

Theſe fair reports in my favour, he ſaid, began ſoon to convince him of Matilda's treachery, and he reproached her with it warmly one day; when with the greateſt *ſang froid* imaginable, ſhe anſwered him in theſe very words, "There "is no ſuch thing as eleemoſynary wiſ-"dom in this life, let philoſophers and "pedagogues ſay what they will—ex-"perience muſt be purchaſed at our own "proper coſt, and not at the expence of "others—From this warning you will "be taught ſufficient ſenſe to know, for "the future, that to make a woman the "confidant of her rival, is appointing "a wolf to be the ſhepherd of a lamb "— I forget whether this maxim be "taken notice of in *Ovid's* Art of "Love; if not, his precepts are imper-"fect."

He

He assured me that, on this reply, his sight and reason forsook him, for a time, and only returned to enable him to view the hag, as she then appeared to him, with the greater horror, and to possess him with a rage that fell but little short of madness. "What would I have given, "at that instant, cried he out, to have "exchanged her sex, into a dozen armed "men!" and then concluded the sentence with this expression — "But I "could not exert such resentment "against her, as she deserved, *because* "*she was in my power.*"

He did every thing he could to find out the place of my banishment, but could not discover it—He did not know of my being moved from Bath till after I had been sent away, or he would have employed

employed ſome truſty perſon or other, to have watched me to the place of my deſtination—The ſurmiſes were various, upon this occaſion; ſome ſaid I was to be carried over to France, and forced into a convent; ſome, that I was to be locked up in Mr. W——'s houſe, in London; and others, that I was to be betrayed into a private mad-houſe, and confined there for life.

During the uncertainty of all theſe ſeveral reports, Captain L—— received an account of his father's illneſs, and immediately repaired to London, to attend on him. His filial duty claimed his firſt regard, and the exerciſe of that virtue ſerved to reſtrain his impatience, and ballance his anxiety on my account, for ſeveral months, while Sir Richard L—— lingered before his death.

Captain L——, now become Sir Thomas L——, with a large patrimony, being at length releaſed from any further reſtraint upon his time and actions, began to turn his whole thoughts towards the unhappineſs of my ſituation, and conſidered himſelf bound, not as a knight-errant merely, but as a man of honour, to reſcue me from that diſtreſs which he had been the innocent cauſe of, through the treachery of one perſon, and the too haſty ſentence and unwarrantable ſeverity of another.—He returned immediately to Bath, in order to get what information he could, about me; and hearing that my dear mother had retired to a village in Flintſhire, took the reſolution of going to wait upon her there.

As

As ſoon as he had informed her who he was, ſhe began to reproach him in the manner it was natural for her to have done, from the circumſtances of his conduct towards me, in the light it had hitherto appeared to her. But when he had diſcloſed the ſcene of villainy and deceit to which he had likewiſe fallen a victim, her affections ſoftened, and ſhe could not help looking upon him then as a third ſufferer in our complicated misfortune.

He contrived artfully to draw from her the ſecret of my abode, but without ſuffering the leaſt hint to eſcape him, of any purpoſe to ſeek me there. Then, taking her hand, and kneeling before her, vowed an attachment to me, during life; ſaid he would ever pay her the

respect and duty of a son-in-law, attending till death, or some more speedy vengeance, might remove Mr. W—— out of the way of his happiness; and offered her an affluent support out of his fortune, becoming the honourable connection which he had then declared between them.

My dear unhappy mother returned him the most grateful thanks for the kindness and generosity of his offer, but her spirit and delicacy made her decline the acceptance of it. She confessed herself alarmed, even at his visit, and urged him to depart instantly, without suffering himself to be known, lest this circumstance, though accidental and innocent in itself, might possibly, in the train of our misfortunes, happen to be

made

made an additional article of ſuſpicion againſt us all. She plained the diſtreſs and difficulty of our ſituations—They embraced, and he retired immediately out of the town.

On his route to Devonſhire Bath lay in his way, where he happened to meet with Captain R——, who had been an officer in the ſame corps with him, in America. There had always ſubſiſted a particular intimacy between them; and as friendſhip is apt to inſpire a confidence, and that his heart was full, he imparted the whole ſecret of our loves and diſappointments to him.

He alſo informed him, at the ſame time, of his reſolve to go and conceal himſelf ſomewhere near the place of my re-

tirement, till he might meet with a favourable opportunity, without hazard to my reputation, of ſeeing me even for a minute, in order to vindicate himſelf from the unjuſt opinion I muſt neceſſarily have conceived of his infidelity and baſeneſs; declaring alſo, that he thought it a duty incumbent on him to watch over my deſtiny, and at the expence of his fortune, and the ſacrifice of his life, to defend me from any injury or violence that might ever be attempted againſt me.

Captain R—— approved his motives, and commended his purpoſe, and ſaid that as it was a ſervice of danger, he had a right to claim the privilege of a friend and comrade, in ſharing it with him—Sir Thomas readily accepted of his company, and they ſet out the next

morning

morning far Hartland, which is within a mile of the caſtle where I reſided. They were attended only by two ſervants, and a couple of pointers, on pretence of going into that country merely as unconnected idle travelling ſportſmen.

Sir Thomas did not acquaint his friend with my name, nor where I was concealed, and uſed every morning and evening to wander alone round the place of my confinement, in hopes of ſeeing me, as I ſhould walk abroad, and of ſpeaking to me unobſerved; which opportunity, after about a fortnight's attendance, he happened to meet with.

In this ſweet, but dangerous converſe, did we paſs the minute, for to us it appeared no more, of our aſſignation; and

now judge me, Edward, with your wonted candor, nor blame this foolish heart, if every tender, every fond sensation it had ever felt, returned with double force! Remember that I had never loved another, and that I still loved him, even when I thought him false! What must my transports be, to find him true!

When, in my turn, I told him the inhuman arts that had been practised to betray me, and estrange our mutual confidence, his passions rose almost to madness, and he a thousand times exclaimed that I was still his wife, that our hearts were joined by heaven, and that no power on earth should ever part us more!

Too eagerly I listened to his ravings, and suffered the enchantment of his voice

to

to lull aſleep my prudence, and my reaſon—I felt as if there were but us alone of all our ſpecies, exiſting in this world, and all other connection, obligation, or regard, appeared to me then but metaphyſical ſpeculation—Our ſad attention to each other's woes, had ſo intirely engroſſed our thoughts, that night ſtole on us, almoſt unperceived; tears had quite dimmed my ſight, and my weak trembling limbs needed aſſiſtance to ſupport my weight—I could not then refuſe his kind ſuſtaining arm, to help me on toward the manſion of my ſorrows, the dungeon of my miſery.

While we were on our way, a ſudden ſtorm aroſe, and the clouds burſt forth in horrid thunder and lightning. By the time we had come within ſight of the

back-door, through which I had that evening ſtolen out, a violent ſhower came on, which obliged me to haſten my ſpeed — I intreated him to leave me, but he held me faſt by the arm, till we came to the houſe, which he entered along with me.

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Here drop the curtain, Edward! and let this firſt falſe ſtep of my whole life, ſtand as a mark for the innocent and unwary to ſhun—Let them reſtrain the firſt encroachments of a favoured lover, nor vainly fancy when once they yield the reins, that they can after check the ardent courſer's ſpeed.

Till

Till that unhappy night, guilt was a ſtranger to my ſuffering heart, and therefore I had never known remorſe, or fear—It was impoſſible to ſoothe my tortured ſoul to peace—The fond deluſion of his *prior right*, both to my perſon and my heart—My former arguments, of *diſſolved tie*, and *transferred affections*, appeared all but ſelf-deceit, in my preſent circumſtances; the wretched ſophiſtry vaniſhed like a phantom, from me, and in its room the prieſt, the altar, all the awful ſcene, where I had bound myſelf by ſolemn vows to be another's wife, now ruſhed upon me; and in the anguiſh of my heart, I bitterly exclaimed againſt him, as the prime ſource of all my miſery, and bad him fly, for ever, from my ſight.

Sir Thomas ſaid every thing that honour could dictate, or love inſpire, to temper my emotions of grief and rage; threw himſelf at my feet, intreated my forgiveneſs, called me his wife, his betrothed before heaven, vowed eternal faith and conſtancy to me, and offered to fly with me to any part of the globe. At length, ſeeing that nothing could calm my diſtraction, he ſtarted up, laid his hand to his ſword, and declared that he would inſtantly put an end to that exiſtence, which my reſentment had now rendered miſerable to him.

His violence ſuſpended for a time, my agitations, by adding terror to my other feelings—I caught hold of his arm, and now became a ſuppliant, in my turn, begging that he would not further injure

jure me by ſuch an horrid outrage, and promiſing to compoſe my mind by penitence and prayer, as ſoon as I was left alone; but upon this condition only, that he ſhould never attempt to ſee me again, till it was poſſible for us to meet, for life, without a crime. We parted, mutually wretched, in agony and deſpair.

The horror with which I was ſeized, the moment he had quitted me, is not to be conceived, without guilt. I loſt that firmneſs now, which had hitherto born up my ſpirits under all my ſufferings. Purity, the only reſource in affliction, was now fled for ever from my breaſt—I felt the full weight of all my ills; and what appeared before oppreſſion on my innocence, ſeemed now but juſtice on my crime. I rejoiced I had

no

no ſiſter! I thought of you, my brother, of my dear mother too, and with a ſhower of tears, took leave of theſe fond names, for ever.

I ſtood in life alone, ſevered from all connection! The ſuſtaining hope of being again reſtored to honour and ſociety, like the fair fruit that ſprang in Pandæmonium, now turned to *bitter aſhes.* What had I further to do with the world? Alas, I had already forfeited all protection! My laſt night's dream—ſay rather viſion—ſtared me full in the face, and upbraided me with the recollection of a maxim I had often heard my parent ſaint deliver, that "we ſhould ever conſider "thoſe perſons we had a reſpect for, as "preſent, when abſent, and as living, "when dead." I kneeled down, and

ſtrove

ſtrove to pray, but could not; I felt myſelf in a ſtate of reprobation, and was almoſt fallen into deſpair—I had no ſtay, no ſupport, no reſource, in ſtore—In all the other ills of life, heaven ſuffers us not to be afflicted, beyond our ſtrength; but wretchedneſs, with guilt, exceeds the ſcheme of Providence.

I then endeavoured to riſe, but was not able to ſtand—my exhauſted ſpirits failed me, and I ſunk down again upon the floor, where I continued ſome time, in a ſtate of ſtupidity; till my maid's opening the door of the ante-chamber, warned me to diſguiſe my diſturbance—I concealed my diſtraction as well as I could, by keeping my face turned from her as much as poſſible, and for the firſt time felt what an irkſome thing it is to have any thing to hide.

The

The ſtorm continued all the night, with extreme violence; but the thunder and lightning did not alarm me as they had done on the evening before—I had now a louder monitor in my breaſt than the one, and with what opens arms and welcome greetings, ſhould I then have embraced the other!

How long Sir Thomas ſtaid at Hartland I cannot tell, for I never ventured abroad, from that time, even to take a walk in the gardens, and he behaved with ſo much honour as to obey my laſt injunction to him, by not ſeeking any further opportunity, as far as I could learn, of ſeeing me again, or even of attempting to write a line to me, leſt it might, as it certainly would, have been intercepted. So that I began ſoon to reconcile

concile myſelf to my preſent ſituation, by making that ſolitude and confinement a voluntary penance, which I had hitherto looked upon as the ſevereſt infliction; conſidering it but as a convent within the ſequeſtered walls of which I ſhould then moſt aſſuredly have concealed myſelf from the world, had I been at liberty to have choſen my ſituation.

I conformed myſelf intirely to a true monaſtic ſtate, for a time, by ſpending my days in faſts, in contrition, and in prayer, hoping that my ſorrows would ere long have ended with my life; but I was, alas! too ſoon convinced that fate had not yet emptied all its quiver againſt me; for I had the inexpreſſible ſhock to find that I was likely to bring an innocent being into the world, at once to prove, and ſhare my infamy.

I ſhall

I ſhall not attempt to deſcribe the agonies of my mind, upon this diſcovery—I muſt live. To have endeavoured ſtill to ſolicit that death, which my deſpair had tempted me to wiſh ſo ardently for before, while it related only to myſelf, would have been a double guilt, in my preſent circumſtances—I muſt therefore ſubmit to become more miſerable, in order to render myſelf leſs criminal.

In ſuch a miſerable and forlorn ſituation, what meaſure was left me to purſue! There was indeed, but one; and let the fatal neceſſity of it, plead my excuſe—I had refuſed to fly with Sir Thomas, when he begged it on his knees; I could not yield deliberate conſent to vice, or think of delivering myſelf

ſelf over to a life of profligacy. But I muſt now temporize with guilt—I muſt now extricate myſelf from my preſent difficulty, ſhame, and danger, at any expence; though with a determined purpoſe to cover my head, immediately after, in ſome ſevere convent, there to endure the harſheſt penances, and hide me from the world for ever.

In the confuſion and diſtraction I was in at that time, I could not frame any certain ſcheme for my relief; beſides, that point depended on the concurrence of another; I therefore wrote a letter to Sir Thomas, entreating the favour of him to come to me directly, upon a buſineſs of conſequence to us both, and in which *ſomething more than my own life*, was the object of my anxiety.

I did

I do not know where Sir Thomas then was, but ventured to direct it to him according to my former addreſs from Bath, to his father's houſe in Bloomſbury ſquare.

But when I had ſealed this billet, a new difficulty occurred to me, how I could poſſibly get it conveyed to him—All connection between me and the world had been cut off, from the moment of my *commitment*. My duenna had, at firſt, refuſed to let a letter from me, even to my mother, be carried to the poſt; and told me frankly then, that any directed to me were ordered to be returned from thence, unopened, to Mr. W——.

The danger preſſed, and ſome attempt muſt be hazarded. I recollected that

that there was a labourer who generally worked in the garden, and appeared to be a perſon of rational intelligence; I therefore went out to him, and gave the letter into his hands, with a bribe of five guineas, which fee I promiſed to double for him, on his return with an anſwer, and hinted to him all proper cautions, with regard to the ſecrecy of his commiſſion.

I inſtructed the meſſenger to make ſome pretence or other, of private buſineſs, for abſenting himſelf from his ſervice, and deſired him not to attempt to deliver the anſwer of my letter to me, till he ſhould meet me alone in the garden—I had a full view of it from the windows of my apartment, and watched with the utmoſt impatience, for his appearance

pearance again, from the moment that I thought it poſſible for him to have returned. How much did I envy, during this anxious interval, the infinitely preferable ſtate of the meaneſt peaſant I heard whiſtling careleſsly acroſs the demeſne, who enjoyed peace and competence, without a conſciouſneſs of guilt, or the fear of detection!

At length I had the ſatisfaction to ſee my courier arrive, and waiting till I perceived the coaſt clear, I ſtole out to him, and had the pleaſure to receive a letter from Sir Thomas, filled with the tendereſt profeſſions of love, and the fulleſt aſſurances of honour. He promiſed to be with me that very evening, juſt at night fall, and deſired I would meet him at the end of the grove, near the houſe.

I was punctual to time and place, and found him alſo exact to his appointment.

He was full of tranſport at the ſight of me, but I was not in a fit diſpoſition of mind to attend to his extaſies—I begged he would compoſe himſelf while I looked about through every avenue, to ſee that no prying eye was near, to obſerve our motions; then led him with fearful hands, and trembling ſteps, into the houſe, and we retired up ſtairs together, to my apartment.

As I had not uſed myſelf to eat ſuppers, ever ſince my confinement in this place, I always diſmiſſed my attendant as ſoon as ſhe had left candles lighted on my table, chuſing to ſit up alone, moſt part of the nights, employed

in

in reading, muſing, and working; ſo that I was under no ſort of apprehenſion, of being at any time interrupted in my privacy.

As ſoon as we had got into the room, Sir Thomas attempted to catch me in his arms, but I ſtarted from his embrace—I told him that we were neither of us in time, place, or circumſtances to admit of unwarrantable liberties; that I had deſired this meeting to implore the aſſiſtance of his friendſhip and honour only, not to receive his love; the leaſt overture of which, as I had declared to him before, I was firmly reſolved to oppoſe, till ſuch a time, if ever that happy æra ſhould arrive, as might intitle him to aſk, and me to grant, the unreſerved completion of his

grace which my miſconduct muſt entail upon an honoured parent; nor were you abſent, Edward, from my thoughts. But let me ſay this in my excuſe, that I then flattered myſelf my flight, or rather the motives for it, might remain for ever ſecret, and that living in a foreign land, under a feigned name, my perſon might poſſibly never be diſcovered—and in that caſe, thoſe dear connections could be as little involved in my reproach, as they were concerned in my guilt.

Here end all the reflections I ſhall ever make—The following part of my unhappy ſtory, while I relate it, harrows up my ſoul, congeals my faculties, and impels me to wild diſtraction, or to reprobate deſpair.

When we had thus ſettled the article of our flight together, we agreed further upon the manner and circumſtances of it: Sir Thomas was to retire immediately to his inn, before my garriſon ſhould be ſhut up for the night, and ſend off an expreſs to Exeter, for a poſt-chaiſe, with relays of horſes, to be ready, the next evening, at the further end of the grove, where I promiſed to meet him at the cloſe of day, from thence to launch into a world unknown, without a matron, without a guardian—for I had loſt my innocence.

Juſt as I was riſing up to convey him out of the houſe, I heard ſome haſty ſteps paſſing through the antechamber, the door of my room was ſuddenly burſt open, and I ſaw Mr. W——— enter, with

a piſtol

a piſtol in each hand. Sir Thomas laid hold of his ſword, but before he could draw it, received a bullet in his breaſt—He fell—and, do I ſurvive to tell it! I heard his laſt groan, and ſaw him expire at my feet—I heard, nor ſaw, no more, but falling ſenſeleſs on his lifeleſs boſom, was for a while releaſed from agonies too great for ſufferance.

But my miſeries were not ſo ſoon to have an end. I was dragged back again to life, by the ſtill cruel hands of Mr. W———, who aſſiſted my maid to raiſe me from the floor, and lay me on the bed—The firſt uſe I made of my returning ſenſe, was to riſe upon my knees, and, with upliſted hands, implore his mercy to terminate my miſfortunes and my life together—He looked as if he

would do ſo, but turning from me, cried, "No, thou ſhalt be reſerved for more ex-"emplary vengeance;" and walked immediately out of the room, taking the maid along with him, but leaving the diſcharged piſtol by me, on the bed—

With my reaſon, my horror returned—Let compaſſion but reflect on my ſituation! Barbarity itſelf muſt ſoften into humanity, at the thought. — Loaded with infamy, encompaſſed with miſery, entombed, as it were alive, with the dead! and gazing horribly, without the relief even of tears, on the ſad victim of my ill-ſtarred deſtiny! At length, frantic with grief, with terror and deſpair, unknowing what I did, and without any purpoſed end, I ruſhed down the back-ſtairs, and iſſued through the private door, from that accurſed manſion.

Fear

Fear gave wings to my ſpeed, yet at the ſame time retarded my flight; for though I ran as faſt as it was poſſible, I frequently ſtopped, for ſeveral minutes, to liſten to every ſound I heard; and ſometimes clambered over high ditches, and laid myſelf flat on the ground, to prevent my being ſeen, in caſe I was purſued; though the night was ſo dark, that I could almoſt feel an object before I ſaw it.

My haſte was urged by inſtinct merely, determined to no point, but like a frightened animal I fled from danger without direction in my courſe — My mind was all the while in the ſtate of a dream—I knew of no aſylum, I could frame no purpoſe—At length, exhauſted by fatigue, and oppreſſed with ſorrow,

I ſat myſelf down in the corner of a field, ſurrounded by a little coppice, juſt high enough to conceal me from the view of paſſengers—Here nature, till now reſtrained, ſtill active for its own relief, began to releaſe the utterances of grief, and at the very moment that I felt my heart going to burſt aſunder, my tears broke forth, and I found myſelf at liberty to expreſs my ſufferings, in moanings and exclamations.

This gave me eaſe, at firſt, and I therefore indulged it, for a while, till I began to apprehend, towards day, that the loudneſs of my complaints might poſſibly reach the ear of ſome traveller or villager, and betray the ſituation of my concealment, and the particular circumſtances of my ſtory—But yet I could

not ſilence my cries and lamentations; I became deſperate of all human ſuccour, and thought that even the hands of cruelty might relieve me from the effects of my own diſtraction, by putting an end to my life, without any additional guilt of mine.

At length my voice was heard, and anſwered by one who came ruſtling through the coppice, and in a ſoft ſlender tone, cried out, Where are you, who are you, and what ails you? The ſound at firſt, alarmed me, till I was ſtruck with the appearance of a beautiful boy, of about ſeven years old, at a little diſtance, who, as ſoon as he ſpied me, came running up and told me, that his mamma had been awakened in bed with my cries, had rung her bell, and ordered her ſer-

vant to go ſeek the perſon in grief, but that he got out of the houſe before him, was glad he had found me firſt, and begged I would go home along with him, directly, out of that naſty cold place, to make his mamma's mind eaſy.

The prettineſs of the child's perſon, with the good-natured impatience and anxiety it expreſſed about my ſituation, charmed me in that inſtant of diſtreſs and woe, till he came up cloſe to me; when I felt a ſudden ſhock, at the ſight of him—He ſeemed to be a ſon of Mr. W——'s; he had every feature of his face—I ſtarted and trembled—however, I ſoon recovered myſelf, concluding that ſuch an idea muſt be owing merely to the ſtrong impreſſion which his countenance had made on my mind, at our

laſt

laſt interview, and which a terrified imagination might poſſibly have transferred a likeneſs of, to any object viewed in the uncertain light of a juſt opening dawn—I therefore embraced the lovely child, and walked away with him, leaning on the ſervant's arm, who was then come up, to a neat cottage, which was but a few yards from the ſpot I had been found in.

I was received at the door of the houſe, by a lady of a genteeler appearance than one could naturally expect to have met with, under ſo mean a roof, who with a voice of ſweetneſs welcomed me to what hoſpitality her circumſtances could afford, and taking me by the hand, led me into her beſt apartment—I ſat down on the firſt chair I could reach,

and begged for a glaſs of water, to prevent my fainting, which I apprehended, from my feelings, might probably ſoon happen.

The room we were in was ſoon lighted up with fire and candles, the blaze of which offended my tender ſight, already dimmed by the darkneſs of the foregoing night, and weakened by my tears, which prevented me from being able to view objects diſtinctly enough, at firſt; but when the agitation of my ſpirits had been ſomewhat abated, and that my eyes had recovered their ſtrength a little, I perceived the lady to be a perſon of about four and twenty years of age, and extremely handſome, but ſeeming much impaired in her appearance, by grief or ſickneſs.

Here

Here I began to ſhudder again; for the reſemblance between her and Mr. W—— ſtruck me more forcibly than it had done before, in the child—There could be no equivocation, in this inſtance—her features marked the likeneſs ſtronger, and the clear light, I had then an opportunity of viewing her by, put the ſimilitude beyond a doubt—This myſtery alarmed me—I feared I had fallen into dangerous hands; but it would have been doubly improper to have aſked for a ſolution of this riddle, on account either of the ſeeming to pry into her ſecret, or the hazard of betraying my own.

I therefore concealed my ſurpriſe, though I could not avoid ſhewing my uneaſineſs; which ſhe perceiving, but without

without suspecting the cause, and imputing solely to my misfortunes and fatigue, which she seemed to think were sufferings I had not been much accustomed to, intreated me to repose myself on the bed that was in the chamber, as long as I pleased, without fear of interruption, till I should be inclined to accept of any other kind of comfort or refreshment, that might be within the compass of her poor means to afford me.

The voice of kindness to an oppressed heart, at once soothes, and gives vent to its sufferings. I answered only with my tears; she rose, and taking her child by the hand, said that she was too well acquainted with sorrow to attempt to restrain its course, or think it capable of any other relief, than time and prayer;

adding,

adding, that I need be under no manner of apprehenſion that any curioſity of her's ſhould prompt her to inquire into my ſtory, as the meaſure of her own misfortunes was too full already to admit the addition of another's grief, without the power of alleviating it. She retired immediately without waiting for a reply.

Being now ſheltered from all outward ills and violences, the diſtraction of my mind began to feel itſelf under the leſs controul; deſpair and phrenzy now triumphed over my reaſon and religion; I looked about for ſome inſtrument of deſtruction, to put an end to my miſerable exiſtence, and ſnatching at a ſword that hung unſheathed over the chimney, I had juſt ſet the hilt of it to the ground, when

when my guardian hostess, attentive to my motions, running into the room to see what had occasioned my disturbance, had just time enough to strike the point aside, so that I fell unhurt upon the floor.—

"O stop the hand of rashness! she "exclaimed, nor dare to limit mercy! "He who severely tries, as amply can re-"ward the patient sufferer; let thy proud "heart bow to his high decrees, and "learn to bear thy burthen with sub-"mission."

While thus she spoke, I gazed upon her with silent awe, and thought her more than human—She raised me from the ground, with looks of tenderness, and thus proceeded—"That sorrow has

"beset,

"beset, and has subdued you, I can well
"perceive—Alas! what is your strength
"or mine, opposed to its rude grasp!
"But wherefore then should we rely
"upon ourselves, when offered aid bends
"from high heaven for our acceptance,
"and bids our weak humanity be strong
"in its almighty power!"

I sunk again upon my knees before her, and cried out, "I have no hope in "heaven or earth! Thou messenger of "grace, thy proffered aid is vain! I am "an out-cast from society, nor would "even your charity extend itself to such "a wretch as me, were you to know "my crimes."

"I will not hear them then, she answer-"ed quick, but sure there is no guilt, ex-

"cept

"cept despair, that may not hope for "pardon—Remove that gloomy vice "from your sad heart, and penitence "shall heal the wounds of your offence, "and bid your bleeding bosom be at "peace."

By slow degrees this more than woman, this heaven-instructed comforter, calmed my distracted soul, and reasoned down my frenzy—I passed my word to her not to attempt my life; and I have kept it; have waited till the lingering, though sure bane of human health, unceasing sorrow, shall release my promise, and lay me gently in the silent grave."

As soon as my mind had become somewhat more composed, I began to reflect upon the circumstances of my late misfortune—

fortune—I thought with horror on the impiety of neglecting a duty toward the manes of the unhappy sacrifice of my wayward destiny; I felt like an accomplice in the guilt, if I should not endeavour to rescue the remains of that dear and unfortunate object, from the still continued barbarity of his murderer, and attempt to procure it the rites of christian, at least of human, sepulture.

The idea that first occurred to me, upon this occasion, was to fly off directly to the inn at Hartland, to Captain R—, for Sir Thomas had told me that his friend and confident had accompanied him now, as before — and to have acquainted him with the fatal catastrophé of my story—But how to appear before a stranger,

ſtranger, or indeed any perſon whatſoever, under the ſenſation of conſcious guilt, and public infamy! Beſides, might I not happen to be detected there, and poſſibly have involved a third perſon in my complicated misfortune! However, I contrived to qualify theſe ſcruples, by the ſubterfuge of writing a note to him, containing only theſe few words.

"Your friend is, alas, no more! he "lies murdered at Caſtle W——. I do "not mean by this notice to call even "for juſtice againſt his aſſaſſin, but only "hope that your humanity and friendſhip "may be able to defend his hapleſs corſe "from any further indignity or outrage."

To this billet I did not ſubſcribe any name, but got my kind hoſteſs to ſend it

it off immediately to the inn, by one of the villagers, who was instructed not to say from whence he came, nor to await an answer.

This most excellent woman, so far from desiring to dive into the secret of my distress, made it a point rather, that I should not reveal it, whenever she heard me begin to mourn; but in order, as she said, to convince me that mine was not a partial lot, and that she had herself severely tasted of the bitter cup, she would relate some of those very uncommon misfortunes which had attended her through life, and which might, perhaps, in some measure, reconcile me to my own.

But first she insisted that I should endeavour to recruit my strength and spirits

ſpirits with food and reſt, as the preſerving the proper temperament of the body, was certainly one requiſite towards reſtoring the health of the mind—I accepted her hoſpitality, and breakfaſted on tea, but could not eat—She did not preſs me—She was reaſonable in all things; entreaty, in my ſituation, would have but added to my fatigue, and increaſed my diſguſt. She thought that ſleep might, for a time, better ſupply the place of food; ſhe therefore obliged me to undreſs myſelf and go into bed; where, after having cloſed the windows, as it was now full day, and removed every implement of miſchief out of the room, ſhe left me to repoſe myſelf—if poſſible.

I did what I could, for that purpoſe—I owed that duty to the infant yet unborn,

born, and was ſolicitous to preſerve that part of myſelf, at leaſt, that was innocent. But my ſorrows kept me long awake, till nature, taking advantage of my weakneſs, at length delivered my body over to ſleep, though without compoſing my mind; for my diſturbed imagination purſued me ſtill throughout my ſlumber, preſenting viſions of ſlaughter, gibbets, and executions, to my tortured fancy, all the while; which inſtead of yielding me any manner of refreſhment, by frequent ſtarts awoke me; adding the pains of labour to my other ills, which brought on a miſcarriage, towards the evening.

My humane hoſteſs attended on me with the kindneſs and tenderneſs of a ſiſter, ſupplied me with cordials, kept every thing quiet about me, and would

ſit

ſit up all night, by my bed-ſide, notwithſtanding every oppoſition I could make to it. The next morning ſhe prevailed on me to take ſome ſuſtenance, after which I claimed her promiſe of letting me into the hiſtory of her life; which however, I did not do to ſatisfy an idle curioſity, but thought that the circumſtances of her recital, might perhaps amuſe my mind from too fixed an attention to my own ſorrows, and that the gentle murmurs of her voice, with the monotony of narrative, might poſſibly have conduced to ſlumber.

But judge of my amazement when ſhe began by telling me that ſhe was the daughter, the only child of Mr. W—! I was near betraying myſelf—I could not conceal my ſurpriſe, but cried out,

"It is impoſſible! you cannot be his off-
"ſpring!" She calmly anſwered, "You
"know him then;" and without inquir-
ing further, thus proceeded.

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But as the unhappy Maria is come now to a pauſe in her misfortunes, let us, my dear ſiſter, take this opportunity of reſting a little ourſelves, after the fatigue and horror of her ſtory, before we enter upon another. I confeſs, that when I came to this part of it, I rejoiced to think ſhe was dead; my humanity felt leſs from the reflection that her ſufferings were at an end. As we are affected more by the diſtreſs we ſee, than by what we only hear of, ſo is our compaſſion always

ſtronger for the living ſorrow, than the dead one—Yet one muſt ſtill *weep for Hecuba.*

The wind is become fair for this narrative, but my anxiety has been increaſed at not hearing from you before it changed.

Adieu,

F. CLEVELAND.

LETTER LXVI.

Miſs CLEVELAND to Lady BARTON.

THE following epiſode of the fair Cottager, though ſhort, will be ſome relief to us both, before we proceed to the cataſtrophe of the main action, and conclude the Hiſtory of the unfortunate Maria, whoſe peculiar fate ſuffered

fered not her indignities to terminate with her life, but afterwards delivered over her corſe into the clutches of the brute Colville, to be carried in the proceſſion of a mock funeral, at Amiens.

The STORY *of* Mrs. N——.

My mother was the only child of Captain H——, a younger brother of a diſtinguiſhed family; her ill fortune brought her acquainted, very young, with Mr. W——, while he was a ſtudent at Oxford, and under age—They ſaw, liked, and wedded, without the conſent of parents on either ſide—Captain H—— was afterwards made acquainted with the marriage, but died before my other grandfather, from whom it was thought prudent to keep it ſtill a ſecret, as my dear mother inherited but a very incon-

ſiderable portion. This was made a pretence for keeping their union concealed, during the life of his father; and my mother, who tenderly loved her huſband, conſented to let their connection ſtill wear the veil of myſtery, rather than injure his intereſt, or offend his father.

The doubtfulneſs of her ſituation by degrees detached her own friends intirely from her, and, for ſome years before the death of his father, ſhe lived in perfect ſolitude, hardly ever ſeeing any perſon but her huſband and me, her only child, who were the ſole objects of her care and affection.

I was about ſeven years old when my grandfather W—— died, and I am

perſuaded

perſuaded that if my mother felt any joy upon that occaſion, it was for my ſake only, as ſhe wiſhed to have my legitimacy acknowledged, and my education properly attended to—A long habit of retirement had weaned her from the world, and though of an age to reliſh all its pleaſures, being then but four and twenty, ſhe thought of returning into it rather with diſguſt then delight.

Upon various pretences my father declined owning his marriage, for about two years, and the gentleneſs of my mother's temper prevented her from importuning him, on this or any ſubject; but when ſo long an interval had elapſed, ſince his father's death, and that ſhe perceived a viſible alteration in his beha-

viour towards her, ſhe with the utmoſt mildneſs expreſſed her wiſhes to live with him publicly as his wife—He ſtrove for near a year more, to evade her requeſt; but when her apprehenſions began to be alarmed by his conduct, and that ſhe ventured ſo far as to preſs him on the ſubject, he flew into a rage, and utterly denied his having ever been married to her.

Tears and prayers were all the weapons with which ſhe attempted to aſſert her rights—They had, alas! no power on his obdurate heart—Grief preyed upon her tender frame, and when I had juſt entered my tenth year, ſhe fell into a conſumption—ſhe was ſenſible of her approaching fate, and though ſhe had remitted her own claim to my father's

rank

rank or fortune, ſhe determined not to leave me in the power of a man who had abandoned her to unmerited infamy, but immediately to ſet about proving her marriage, and by that means entitling me both to his name, and a proper proviſion from his fortune.

She ſoon found out that Doctor N—, the clergyman who had married her, lived in the pariſh of ——, in this ſhire; and that my grandfather, old Mr. W—, had preſented him to that living, which was incumbent on ſome part of my father's eſtate—She took me with her, and ſet out immediately for his houſe; which expedition ſhe could eaſily make without her huſband's knowledge, as they had ſeldom lived under the ſame roof together for ſome time paſt.

It is impoſſible to expreſs this worthy man's ſurprize at the ſight of my mother and me, as my father had informed him that ſhe was dead above three years before, left no child, and earneſtly requeſted him never to mention his having been married to her, as it could anſwer no end to her then, would certainly diſoblige ſome of his relations, through whoſe aſſiſtance, he ſaid, he had conceived reaſonable hopes of ſtrengthening his intereſt in the ſhire, and of improving his fortune.

As ſoon as my mother had acquainted him with her ſtory, the good old man promiſed her to pay a viſit, the next day, to my father, who had been his pupil at the univerſity, and endeavour to influence him, by gentle means, to

do

do her the juſtice he owed her, rather than reduce her to the irkſome neceſſity of expoſing him and herſelf, by an appeal to ſome higher and more legal tribunal; aſſuring her, at the ſame time, that if his mediation ſhould not be attended with that ſucceſs which he wiſhed, and had reaſon to expect from it, he would no longer heſitate a moment about proving the marriage, through all the forms of law.

My dear unhappy mother wept and thanked him; and the doctor, according to his promiſe, proceeded the next day to Caſtle W——, which is about ten miles from this village, being the manſion ſeat where my father then reſided. It happened that he was from home, at the time the doctor went to his houſe;

come from Exeter, where he was then ſtationed, to pay a viſit to his uncle; and among other articles of news, told him that his landlord and patron, as he ſtiled my father, was ſoon to be married to a young lady of family and fortune, in the city he came from, and that he ſuppoſed the doctor would be then called upon to perform the ceremony.

The young man had never heard any thing of our ſtory, and only mentioned this particular among ſome other indifferent circumſtances of the time—His uncle did not open his mind to him upon the ſubject, but retired immediately to my mother's apartment, who happened luckily not to be by when this matter was related, and after endeavouring to prepare her as much as

poſſible

poſſible for the ſhock, acquainted her with the intelligence he had juſt received.

To you, dear Madam, who ſeem to have known affliction, it muſt be needleſs to deſcribe the emotions of my unhappy mother, upon this occaſion — The humane doctor N—— ſaid every thing he could think of, to aſſwage her diſtraction, and repeated the promiſe he had made her before, of concurring with her in an immediate vindication of her rights, ſeeing there was now no time to loſe, and that it was ſufficiently apparent Mr. W—— meant to take advantage of her too long acquieſcence under the concealment of her marriage, and, by this new and more public engagement, to bar her claim for ever.

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He confeſſed, that notwithſtanding his plauſible profeſſions to them both, at parting, his mind could not help ſtill harbouring ſome doubts with regard to the ſincerity of them—For however, ſaid he, my chriſtianity may incline me to a perfect faith in the efficacy of divine grace, one is naturally apt to ſuſpect your extempore converts, eſpecially where the reformation ſeems, as in this caſe, to have been brought about by the neceſſity of ſome preſent urgency.

He concluded then, that my father's ſcheme, in carrying my mother and me out of the kingdom, muſt be to ſeparate us from the advice or aſſiſtance of whatever friends we might have here, and that being bereft of the protection of Engliſh laws, he meant to ſhut us up

in.

in a convent together, for life, upon ſome forged pretence or other; which would leave him at liberty to return in triumph home again, and complete his baſe purpoſe with his new miſtreſs at Exeter.

That very day doctor N—— gave my mother a regular certificate of her marriage, ſigned by himſelf, as the clergyman who had performed the ceremony, referring to the page of the pariſh regiſtry, where that tranſaction was entered; at the bottom of which he put a memorandum of the names of the two witneſſes who were preſent, one of which is ſtill alive, if that were an article of any manner of conſequence to me now.

The next day my father came to the houſe, with a carriage to convey us off privately,

privately, through the country, to Weymouth, where he told us he had prepared a ſhip to ſail over directly to the continent. My mother made no reply, but wept, and quitted the room, to leave Dr. N—— at liberty to explain the reaſon of her ſilence and ſorrow.

Their converſation was warm, but ſhort—The doctor made remonſtrances to him upon his behaviour, both from religion, morals, and the laws; which my father reſented with the higheſt intemperance, declaring that he had happily one way ſtill left, to ſcreen himſelf from perſecution and proſecution both, and then ruſhed out of the houſe; which expreſſion was, ſoon after, more fully explained, by hearing that he had gone off to France, whither no legal proceſs could purſue him.

Theſe

Theſe tranſactions were kept a perfect ſecret from me for ſeveral years—My fond mother thought it too ſoon for me to become acquainted with affliction, and our worthy protector had alſo conceived a certain delicate idea, about me, with regard to vice—His opinion was certainly juſt, that the longer young people are kept ignorant of it, the ſafer for their morals—Purity of thought, and innocence of action, ſhould be ſuffered to gain ſtrength by habit, before they know that there is ſuch a thing as wickedneſs in human nature—The ſhock and abhorrence will be the greater on the firſt inſtance, and the danger of example leſs.

Doctor N—— kept us with him, and ſupported us out of his own fortune, while my poor mother lived, or rather

languiſhed,

languiſhed, which ſhe did for about two years, and then expired of a broken heart. The doctor was ſo generous as to make her laſt moments eaſy, by promiſing to take care of me, till he could force my father, by law, to make a proviſion for me, as his legitimate child; ſaying, that he thought it his duty to pay the debt of gratitude he owed to my grandfather, to the only part of his family now that deſerved it.

My father's emiſſaries ſoon informed him of my mother's death, and he returned to his ſeat a joyful widower—The doctor immediately applied to him on my behalf, but ſo far from being ſoftened by his interceſſion, he loaded him with abuſe, and threatened him with ruin if he did not inſtantly conſent to

my

my being ſent to a convent abroad, and ſolemnly ſwear never to mention his marriage with my mother, nor again interfere in his domeſtic affairs, upon any occaſion or pretence. What became of his Exeter amour, I know not, having never heard a word about it, ſince.

Faithful to his promiſe, the doctor refuſed to give him the ſatisfaction he required, nor would he conſent to my going into a convent, upon any terms. Conſcious of the purity of his life and actions, he diſregarded my father's threats, and continued to treat me with the ſame kindneſs as if I had been his daughter.

My father, who was lord of the manor, ſtirred up moſt of the doctor's pariſhioners to non-payment of tithes, and

ſupported

ſupported them in every kind of inſolence and injuſtice againſt him. This excellent divine, who was really a believer and follower of the doctrine which he taught, ſuffered thoſe who had taken his cloak to take his coat alſo, and having no activity in him, but for others, in a very ſhort time was deprived of the means of ſupport, either for himſelf or family—But why ſhould I dwell longer on thoſe miſeries, of which I was the unhappy, though innocent cauſe!

This beſt of men breathed his laſt ſigh in a priſon, about three years after my mother's death, and muſt latterly have wanted even the common neceſſaries of life, but for the duty and affection of his nephew, who was now become a captain, and more than ſhared his little income

with

with him and me, who, from the time that my dear guardian was thrown into confinement, had been placed by him to board and lodge with the wife of his parish-clerk.

During all the sufferings of this true divine he was never prompted to revile the cruel author of them; nor to repine at the wretched state to which he was reduced; and even to his last moments comforted and exhorted both me, and his fellow prisoners, to bear their crosses with resignation, with chearfulness, and with forgiveness to their prosecutors and oppressors.

While the doctor was able to keep house, captain N— used often to visit there, and stay sometimes whole months

months together, with us; and after his uncle's misfortune, which ſeparated us, he came frequently to ſee me, at my new lodgings. He was a very worthy agreeable young man, we had inſenſibly conceived a liking for each other, and juſt before his uncle's death, he aſked his conſent to offer his hand and heart to me.

The good man confeſſed himſelf much pleaſed at this overture, and upon mentioning it to me, ſaid, that when I ſhould no longer have a protector in him, I muſt be either thrown upon the world, to get my bread in a ſtate of ſervitude, which he thought both dangerous, and improper for me, or obliged to ſue to my father for a ſupport, which he feared he would refuſe, unleſs he were to confine me in a convent, which he moſt earneſtly entreated

entreated me not to conſent to, but to perſevere in ſuffering for the faith wherein I had been bred.

And with regard to his nephew, he paid me the compliment to think I was capable of rendering him happy, and that eventually I might turn out a good fortune to him, either by my father's death or reformation. I received the propoſal, I confeſs, with pleaſure, and readily pronounced that conſent with my lips, which my heart had given before — My more than father! my guardian! my protector! now ſaw his deſire accompliſhed in our union—With his dying hands he joined ours, and then ſlept in peace.

For three whole years I was the happieſt of human kind; my huſband was

all

all that my fondeſt wiſhes could have framed; that child you ſaw, was his delight and mine; no frown e'er clouded either of our brows, or ſlighteſt contradiction paſſed our lips: I was—I was too bleſt! till heaven reclaimed its beſt, its deareſt gift, and took him early, to reward his virtues.

Tho' bred with ſuch a ſhining pattern as doctor N— before me, and long nurtured as I had been, in the ſchool of adverſity, yet this trial was too much for my weak mind, which ſunk oppreſſed into legarthic woe—The voice of reaſon is not heard by grief, religion only reaches the ſad heart—Cheered by the boundleſs hope of paſſing an eternity of bliſs with him I now lamented, I raiſed my drooping eye lids from the

grave, and turned my views to heaven, implored its grace to bend my ſtubborn ſoul, to its high will, and ſoothe my warring paſſions to ſubmiſſion—My prayer was heard; no murmurs, no complainings, from that pious moment of reflection, have iſſued from my lips; in humble confidence, without impatience, I wait for my diſmiſſion from this vale of ſorrow.

Yet let me own that were there not a weight thrown in that ſcale that ties me down to earth, my reſignation would have had more merit. My dear, my much loved boy, abates my ardor for the land of bliſs, and makes me fear that while his fate is doubtful, I ſhould even ſhudder on the brink of my long wiſhed-for voyage.

In a heart rightly formed there cannot be a void — Maternal fondneſs now fills the place of chaſte connubial love, and in this ſoft exerciſe of my affections, no griefs diſtract, no tranſports rend my ſoul.

This place I live in, is a freehold that Captain H——, my grandfather, had purchaſed ſoon after I was born, for the term of three lives; his own, my mother's, and mine—His wife had been dead, ſome years before. It conſiſts of this cottage, a ſmall plough-land, a cloſe for paſture, and a little garden; at an inconſiderable rent—Here I have lived all my life, except while I was ſheltered under the protection of the good doctor N——; during which interval the farm was let to a tenant at will, till I was married, when my dear huſband and I came to

reſide

reſide here as much as his military duty would permit; and here he left me, when he was ordered with the regiment abroad laſt war; in the firſt campaign of which he was killed.

The produce of this ſmall demeſne, with my penſion as a Captain's widow, is all I have to maintain my child and me, and require the cloſeſt attention and œconomy to render them ſufficient—And even theſe pittances depend upon the precarious tenure of my life—but I will not doubt the goodneſs of Providence, and truſt it will raiſe him up a ſupport, when it ſhall think proper to withdraw mine.

Now judge, unhappy ſtranger, ſhe continued, if I have not a right to ſpeak of

[illegible] of reſignation and religion, as [illegible] balm of ſorrow! Philoſophy and [illegible] in this, there is a hope beyond the grave, and nought but vice, unatoned by penitence and piety, need ever urge deſpair!

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I had hung with mute attention on her ſtory, my tears had flowed with her's, and while ſhe ſpoke, her griefs ſuſpended mine; admiration of her virtue now ſucceeded, and kept me ſilent ſtill, but there, alas! our ſympathy muſt end, ſhe might rejoice in her afflictions paſt, whilſt I muſt mourn for ever!

I paſſed ſix days with this uncanonized ſaint, this living Patience, of whom Shake-

Shakeſpear's image was but a prototype*. She knew me not, all the while, and I could not reveal myſelf, nor had the particulars of my ſad ſtory yet reached her incurious ears, to have given her the leaſt cauſe of ſuſpecting who I was.

By various methods, and ſlow degrees, I purſued my journey towards Flintſhire. As I drew nearer to my mother's peaceful cottage, I anticipated the miſery and horror ſhe would feel, when ſhe ſhould know my ſituation, and conſidered myſelf as a wretch who was going to communicate an incurable diſeaſe, to the fond boſom that had nurſed and cheriſhed it—Prophetic were my thoughts!

* "She ſat like Patience on a monument, ſmiling "at grief."

Twelfth Night.

The firſt emotions ſhe felt on ſeeing me me, were thoſe of love and joy; ſhe ſtrained me to her honeſt breaſt, with true maternal tenderneſs, and exclaimed, "Mr. W—— has at laſt relented, and "bleſſed me with a ſight of my Maria!" Whilſt I, o'erwhelmed with her unmerited kindneſs, ſunk ſpeechleſs to the earth—Tears were the ſole return that I could make to her careſſes and inquiries.

My mother was alarmed; "Sorrow, "ſhe ſaid, my child, we both have "known, but ſure that ſhould not ſeal "your lips to thoſe who wiſh to ſhare "and ſoothe your griefs, or render you "inſenſible to love like mine."

I graſped her honoured hand, preſſed it to my heart, and vainly ſtrove to articulate a ſound—For ſeveral hours I remained

mained in this ſituation — At length my ſpeech returned, and throwing myſelf on my knees before her, I could not be prevailed on to forſake that poſture, till I had recounted to her the whole of that horrid tale, which you have juſt now read.

I will not wound your heart, my brother, with attempting to deſcribe the agonies ſhe ſuffered, during the ſad recital of my ſtory, yet this truly virtuous, this ſcarce erring woman, pitied the crimes which ſhe herſelf deteſted, and ſpoke of peace and pardon to my afflicted ſoul! even to the lateſt moment of her life—for ſhe is dead!—ſhe ſtrove to hide her anguiſh, and to leſſen mine.

The night I got there, after I had been in bed, and juſt falling into a ſlum-

ber, from the fatigue of my journey and the waſte of my ſpirits, I was alarmed by the noiſe of ſome perſons, who knocked loudly at the door of the houſe, and demanded admittance—The people with whom we lodged refuſed them entrance, unleſs they would firſt declare the purpoſe of their errand—This they refuſed, but ſending for a ſledge, ſoon battered down all oppoſition, and ruſhed in.

My mother and I had but juſt time to hurry on our cloaths, when an ill looking fellow, with a candle in one hand, and a piſtol in the other, came into our chamber, attended by two other ruffians — Upon their appearance we inſtantly offered to ſurrender all our effects, and promiſed neither to make reſiſtance nor purſuit. They ſeemed highly to reſent

our

our manner of reception, and replied, that they ſcorned to uſe any manner of violence that might not be juſtified by the law.

The principal of the men then told me that he was ſteward to Mr. W——, and had been diſpatched by him with a warrant to apprehend me, for the murder of Sir Thomas L——, early the next morning after the fact, and my *flight for the ſame*, with directions to come and look for me in that place, as it was natural to ſuppoſe that I ſhould have flown to my mother for refuge, after my crime—He ſaid that he had examined and inquired for me, all along the road, and had concealed his buſineſs in that village, for ſeveral days, lying in wait for my arrival.

Horror and amazement ſeized both my unhappy mother and me—I pitied her more than myſelf—I was hardened to ſufferings, I wiſhed to die, though not with ignominy, and felt diſappointed at finding the purpoſe of theſe houſe-breakers had ended with ſo little violence to my life—I apprehended no danger from the proſecution; but to think of an arraignment, and a public trial, was diſtraction! I reflected deeply on the divine and ſuſtaining ſentiments of the amiable Mrs. N——, and her precepts and example had a ſalutary effect on my mind.

The ſteward then returned to the inn, to ſend off to Cheſter for a chaiſe to carry me to Exeter, the county town of Devonſhire, to take my trial at the next

aſſizes,

aſſizes, which were immediately to be held there; but left his two guards in the houſe to prevent my eſcape—My afflicted mother, who had fallen upon the bed when ſhe heard the ſhocking ſentence pronounced, lay ſilent for a minute, then turning to me, who was ſtanding ſpeechleſs, and motionleſs, before her, with a look of wildneſs and deſpair, cried out, "I'll go with you, I'll "die with you, we never ſhall be parted "more." I threw myſelf down by her, we embraced and lay folded in each other's arms, till we were ſummoned, the next morning, to begin our journey.

We travelled with all the expedition that our conductors were pleaſed to make, and ſuffered every indignity and inſolence of office, all the way, that mean

persons are apt to inflict on those above them, whenever they happen to gain an authority over them.—All this I felt not but as I sympathized with my unhappy mother, for as to myself I welcomed every mortification and distress I met with, and even wished them still more severe.

We were at length relieved from this oppression by arriving at Exeter, where we were carried directly to the sheriff's house, and delivered over into his custody; for my dear mother would not quit me, but said that the same prison, or the same grave, should receive us both — This humane person behaved with the utmost tenderness and politeness toward us, offered us every refreshment and accommodation that his hospi-

tality

tality could afford, and told me that he would impoſe no other reſtraint on me than an earneſt requeſt that I would accept of the beſt apartment in his houſe, and prevail on my mother to ſhare the ſame comforts and conveniences with me—He then bowed and retired.

He returned ſoon after, to introduce a gentleman to us, who he ſaid had ſome affair of buſineſs to communicate to me, and then withdrew again. But how was I overwhelmed with confuſion, when the perſon announced his name to be Captain R——! The confidant of my ſhame, ſtood before me—My trial was began, already—I felt as if I was at the bar.

This gentleman behaved with great good-breeding and compaſſion to me, on that

that occaſion; he ſcarcely looked at me, but going up directly to my mother, whom he ſaw in tears, aſſured her that ſhe need not ſuffer the leaſt uneaſineſs on account of her daughter, as he had already made her innocence appear ſo fully to the Juſtice, that ſhe was not to be arraigned, on the trial, and might now conſider herſelf perfectly free from her arreſt.—He prevented us, he would not liſten to our acknowledgments, but directing his diſcourſe to me, though without turning his eyes towards me, thus proceeded.

"In order to make you acquainted "with the preſent ſituation of this un-"happy buſineſs, it is neceſſary to me, "Madam, to recount the regular pro-"ceſs of it, from the moment I had

"been

" been informed of the event, by an
" anonymous billet, to this time. I ſoon
" gueſſed the writer, and as quickly ſuſ-
" pected the author of the tragedy—
" Upon theſe hints, I immediately ap-
" plied to a magiſtrate in the neighbour-
" hood, and after having given in my
" depoſitions, according to the notice
" I had received, I became armed with
" proper force and authority, and rode
" directly to Caſtle W——.

" I was not denied admiſſion, and
" upon opening my commiſſion, Mr.
" W—— charged you, Madam, directly
" with the fact; ſaid you had abſconded
" immediately after the murder, and
" that he had juſt then iſſued a warrant,
" and diſpatched a purſuit after you,
" in order to have you apprehended and
" delivered

"delivered over into the hands of juf-
"tice—Then, by way of ſupporting his
"aſſertion by circumſtances, led me up
"ſtairs into the room where the corpſe
"lay extended on the ground, ſhewed
"me the diſcharged piſtol lying on the
"bed, and pointed to the blood, with
"which the coverlet had been ſtained in
"many places.

"I wept over the body of my dear
"friend," ſaid he, "then turning to Mr.
"W——, ſhewed him the note I had
"received, and aſked him if he knew
"the hand? Yes (he replied quick) it is
"my wife's, and one line in it I think
"ſufficiently certifies againſt her—*I do*
"*not mean by this notice to call even*
"*for juſtice againſt his aſſaſſin.* Whoſe
"danger, I pray you, do you imagine
"ſhe ſhould be ſo tender of? Would

"ſhe

" ſhe not have named the aſſaſſin, if
" that might have been done, with
" ſafety to herſelf?"

" Sir, I replied, you will now give
" me leave to reaſon upon the circum-
" ſtances relative to this melancholy
" affair, in turn. It cannot be difficult,
" conſidering the ſeveral parties, both
" ſeparately and connected, to ſuppoſe
" the motive of Sir Thomas's errand
" hither; and whether it were moſt na-
" tural for the fond miſtreſs, or the
" jealous huſband, to have been the
" murderer, is a queſtion fitter to be ar-
" gued in a court, than diſcuſſed here.
" For which reaſon, (concluded I) I
" ſhall pretend to act but miniſterially
" upon this occaſion; and therefore I
" do now, in the name of juſtice, arreſt
" you and your whole houſhold, in

" order

" order to take your trials, jointly and
" ſeverally, for this murder.

" Mr. W—— ſeemed ſtartled at this
" diſcourſe, but talked highly, and began
" to put himſelf into a poſture of defence;
" upon which I preſented a piſtol to his
" breaſt, and pointing to the mangled
" corpſe, cried, There, Sir, is your exam-
" ple, ſhould you attempt to reſiſt. He
" then ſurrendered himſelf a priſoner, the
" reſt of his family did the ſame; and after I
" had got the body laid with decency on
" the bed, left the ſervants of the de-
" ceaſed to attend it, and given charge of
" the funeral to the clergyman of the pa-
" riſh, I eſcorted my captives to the goal
" in this city, where they have remained
" ever ſince.

" Upon their examination before a ma-
" giſtrate in this town, (continued he) the
" maid

" maid ſervant, who ſaid ſhe had attended
" on you, Madam, turned evidence, to
" ſave her life, and charged her maſter
" with the murder. She ſaid that he had
" come to the houſe, in the evening, pri-
" vately, and deſired her to conceal his
" arrival from her miſtreſs. That he told
" her there was an aſſignation fixed for
" that night, between Sir Thomas L—
" and his wife; and about the time that
" he thought they might have put out the
" candles, he took her with him to the
" room, to be a witneſs of what he ſaid
" would intitle him to a divorce; but that
" being diſappointed in that circumſtance,
" and alarmed at ſeeing Sir Thomas put-
" ting his hand to his ſword, he diſcharged
" the piſtol, and killed him on the ſpot.

" Mr. W—— did not make any man-
" ner of interruption or reply to this wo-
" man's

"man's depoſition, while it was going "on, ſaying only, after it was over, that "he thought himſelf ſufficiently juſtified "in the action, both from law and con- "ſcience; and that juſtice, without fa- "vour, was all he ſhould deſire, to in- "demnify him on the day of trial.

"Thus ſituated is this unhappy affair "at preſent; and with regard to your "arreſt, Madam, I have had that ſuper- "ſeded already, before you arrived in "town, as the warrant was only founded "on ſurmiſe; and I have myſelf given "bail for your appearance on the trial, "juſt to corroborate the ſervant maid's "teſtimony."

I had hitherto lain reclined on my arm, hiding my face, tears, and bluſhes, with

with my hand; but when he came to the last expression, I forgot all reserve, and starting up, "No, sir, said I, it can-
"not, shall not be—I will never appear
"in evidence against Mr. W——: you
"may drag me before the court, but
"no violence shall make me speak there.
"Justice I acknowledge to be a duty,
"but there are situations which may
"exempt one from the observance of it.
"Duties cannot contradict duties, and I
"have already too far erred against mine
"to him, to think of adding a further
"injury.—And if my death is to be the
"consequence of my silence, I am willing
"to pay that forfeit, to redeem his."

Captain R—— seemed struck with my sentiments on so difficult an occasion, and told me that he would consult his lawyers

lawyers that night, whether my evidence might be dispensed with; and would wait on me again, the next morning—He then took his leave, and left my poor mother and me to pass an anxious, sleepless night, in mourning the distress of our present situation.

The next day he came to us, and said that his counsel had told him, that as he was the prosecutor, he might excuse whatever witness he pleased, especially as the servant maid's testimony was full enough to the point already—We thanked him extremely for his humanity and politeness, and the instant he retired we hired a chaise, and drove out of the town, on our road back to Flintshire, flying as fast as possible from a scene of so much horror.

The

The anxiety of mind and fatigue of body which my dear mother had laboured under, all this while, had brought on a fever that confined her in bed, from the moment we reached her habitation in Flintſhire. I wept, prayed, and attended on her, during her illneſs, till her laſt moment—She bleſſed her children—even me ſhe bleſſed, and prayed for peace and pardon to my polluted ſoul! ſhe expired in my fainting arms—leaveing me friendleſs, in a world alone!

But fate had not yet done with me! I was not yet unhappy enough! About two days after her death, I received a letter from Captain R——, who had found out the place of my reſidence, from Mr. W——'s ſteward, which brought me the following account from Exeter.

" The facts and arguments upon
" which Mr. W—— grounded his de-
" fence, were these—When Mrs. W——
" had given her letter for Sir Thomas
" to the messenger, he mentioned it to
" the gardener, and he communicated
" his intelligence to her maid, who had
" been appointed a spy over all her ac-
" tions—She took it from the man, in-
" closed it to her master, and sent him
" off directly with it to London.

" As soon as he received it, he broke
" it open, and took a copy, which he
" made his own man compare, and wit-
" ness, then sealed and sent off the ori-
" ginal to Sir Thomas, by a special mes-
" senger, who pretended he had come
" from Castle W——, not caring to in-
" trust the fellow who had brought it, lest
" he

" ſhould have betrayed him, as he had
" before deceived Mrs. W——. The
" anſwer he proceeded with in the ſame
" manner and then diſpatched the firſt
" carrier with it to Mrs. W——.

" This ſtate of the caſe Mr. W——
" had ſent up to London, along with the
" atteſted copies of the letters, for the
" opinion of an eminent counſel, to know
" whether upon ſuch a certainty of the
" fact, and finding the adulterer in ſuch
" an improper ſituation with his wife,
" the laws did not grant ſome indul-
" gence to the tranſports and reſentment
" of a provoked and injured huſband!

" The lawyer's reply was, that ſuch
" conſiderations had, indeed, been ſome-
" times permitted to be laid before a

remained to ſtay my overburdened heart, I have ſunk beneath its weight; my waſting form and ſlackened nerves give hopes of my releaſe, and with this heavy taſk, which now draws near an end, I truſt my woes ſhall ceaſe.

The firſt thing that occured to my mind, upon this tragical event, was the benefit that my humane and hoſpitable friend of the cottage, and her lovely child, might poſſibly receive from it; and I had the ſatisfaction before I left the kingdom, to hear that Mrs. N—— had ſufficiently proved her mother's marriage, by the certificate and witneſs, and taken poſſeſſion of caſtle W——, as ſole heireſs to her father's eſtate and fortune, which were very conſiderable.

I did

I did not make myſelf known to her, as under our different circumſtances no manner of connection could ever properly have ſubſiſted between us; but, as I was entitled to a jointure of four hundred pounds a year, by marriage ſettlement, I put the deed, which had been left in my mother's poſſeſſion, into the hands of an attorney at Cheſter, to claim my rights, which were not denied; and on receipt of the firſt payment I quitted England, for ever, and came over here to France, with a purpoſe of retiring immediately into a convent, for life.

I began my narrative of woe, before I left England, and have completed it ſince I came over, and ſhall put it into the India Houſe for you, at Paris, if I

may have life enough to carry me thither, as I design to fix my residence in some of the distant provinces beyond it. But I have been confined here, these two days, not being able to proceed further, from the failure of my strength, and the dejection of my spirits.

Adieu, my dearest brother! may watchful angels hover round you, and guard and guide your footsteps in the paths of virtue; I feel myself growing weaker, every line I write, and think that here my journey and my cares will shortly end together. With my last sigh I pray to be forgiven by Heaven and you! and now, once more, adieu, I hope, for ever.

MARIA.

LETTER LXVII.

Lady BARTON to Miſs CLEVELAND.

In anſwer to Letter LXII.

YES, Fanny, your remark is juſt —The tears which flow for foreign griefs, help ſomewhat to ſoften the poignancy of home felt ſorrows. I ſympathized throughout every circumſtance of the ill-fated Maria's diſtreſs, and was rejoiced at her lucky eſcape from the deſperate guilt of ſuicide.

It is intolerance not intolerability, impatience not ſuffering, than ever impels to ſuch an act. For it requires no further arguement that this, that God is juſt, to evince that our ſtrength of mind and body muſt be equally balanced by

nature; ſo that the one may be ſufficiently able to bear, whatever can be inflicted on the other, until death, without precipitation, neceſſarily comes to the relief of the overburdened ſufferer. For pain or grief are able to do their own buſineſs, without the aſſiſtance of a crime.

From whence I argue, that reſolution may laſt as long as life, and that a virtuous ſoul may be ſooner ſeparated than ſubdued.—I have endeavoured to expreſs myſelf upon this ſubject, with all the energy I could—I feel an intereſt in this reaſoning, at preſent, and ſhall repoſe my truſt in it.

Maria was certainly more wretched, than I am, by the addition of one circumſtance,

cumſtance, which alone was ſufficient to have rendered her ſo; but ſurely we may hope, without offence to the moſt rigid virtue, that penitence and ſufferings, ſuch as hers, may have atoned for her trangreſſion, and that ſhe now is happy —'Tis to be innocent, to be unhappy— Whilſt I muſt ſtill ſubſcribe myſelf your unhappy but affectionate ſiſter,

L. BARTON.

LETTER LXVIII.

Lady HUME to Lady BARTON.

In anſwer to letter LXI.

Cleveland-hall.

YOUR Fanny, my Louiſa, has obeyed your kind command, and now claims the ſad indulgence promiſed in your laſt—I long, yet dread to know

what thoſe events can be, which you deem more intereſting, than any of thoſe extraordinary circumſtances, which have already happened to you!

I cannot expreſs the mixed ſenſation which my heart is at preſent ſenſible of! While I give it up to that joy, which happineſs like mine ſhould inſpire, I fancy I defraud you of that portion of ſorrow which is due to your diſtreſs; and while I tenderly reflect upon your ſufferings, and buſy my imagination in trying to diſcover thoſe additional woes you hint at, the big drop which ſteals down my cheek, ſilently reproaches me with ingratitude to my dear brother, to his amiable wife, to my reclaimed prodigal, to Providence! and when, as it ſometimes happens, my melancholy becomes

contagious,

contagious, and that I ſee a gloomy look of inquiry ſpread over thoſe countenances, which ſhould be lighted up with ſmiles, I ſtrive, forgive me, my Louiſa! to forget your ſorrows, and diſpel the cloud I have created, by affected efforts of chearfulneſs.

But I will no longer, like Miſs Howe in Clariſſa, content myſelf with poorly lamenting the unhappineſs of my friend —I can have no doubt of Lord Hume's indulgence, I will requeſt his permiſſion to ſee and embrace my ſiſter—Her ſighs and tears ſhall flow upon my boſom! and I will try to pour the balm of comfort into her's.

You did not date your laſt letter, ſo that I cannot even gueſs where you are

at preſent; but I ſhall direct this to Southfield, and impatiently wait for the explanation of that gloomy myſtery in which you ſeemed involved.—All here ſalute you with the tendereſt affection, for as I now conſider myſelf accountable to lord Hume, for every moment of my time, I proclaimed my intention of writing to you, before I retired from the drawing-room; and ſhall try to return to it with as chearful a countenance as I can poſſibly aſſume; but be aſſured, that my heart will never be truly at eaſe, till I know that your's is ſo —As I ſhall never ceaſe to be your faithfully affectionate

friend and ſiſter

F. HUME.

LETTER LXIX.

Lady BARTON to Lady HUME.

THE knowing that my Fanny is happy, is certainly a reason for my being less wretched than when I wrote last; but then the cruel thought of interrupting her felicity, must add to my distress—And can it bear addition! O yes! yes! the torturing suspence which I now feel, too surely informs me that there yet remains many arrows in the quiver of adversity, which may still be pointed at my sad heart, and yet not pierce it through.

O Fanny, it is very difficult to die! at least I find it so—Death sports with human miseries and would rather increase, than end them—" 'Tis his delight to bid

" the

" the wretch ſurvive the fortunate! the
" feeble wrap the athletic in his ſhroud,
" and weeping parents build their chil-
" dren's tombs!"

Excuſe this rhapſody—I will try to collect myſelf, and acquaint you with the particulars of my preſent diſtreſs.

The morning after I had written to you from Elm-grove, I ordered my carriage, as I had intended, and at breakfaſt acquainted Lady Creſwell with my deſign of ſetting out for Southfield.—Every argument that friendſhip or politeneſs could urge, were uſed, to prevail on me to ſtay with them, for a few days longer; but I continued firm to my purpoſe.

I told Harriet that ſhe might remain with lady Creſwell till ſhe came to re-

turn

turn my viſit, which both ſhe and Sir Harry promiſed ſhould be in ten days or a fortnight — Harriet declined my indulgence, and entreated me, with uncommon earneſtneſs, to take her with me—I conſidered her refuſal as the effect of her attention and complaiſance to me, till with a very ſolemn air ſhe ſaid to me, when we are alone, "If "*you*, Madam, think it neceſſary to quit "Elm-grove, I am ſure I ought to do "ſo too." I acquiſced in her opinion, and deſired her to get ready immediately.

Lord Lucan, to my great ſatisfaction, did not appear at breakfaſt—when he was inquired for, the ſervants ſaid he had rode out, very early in the morning. I took my friend lady Creſwell aſide, and requeſted her, not without ſome con-

fusion, to deliver my letter to his lordship, as soon as he returned from riding. Almost at that instant, a servant of Sir William's galloped into the court-yard, and presented the following billet to me.

To Lady BARTON.

The infamy of your late conduct has for some time made me balance whether I should by the bearer command your immediate return to my house, or forbid your ever entering it. My respect for your family has so far turned the scale in your favour, as to make me, though unwillingly, condescend to receive you under my roof, till they shall be acquainted with your vileness, and either find you out a proper asylum, or join in abandoning you, with your highly injured husband,

W. BARTON.

I have already told you that Lady Creſwell was with me, when I received this ſhocking ſentence — amazement ſuſpended all my powers, while I read it! my ſight forſook me, the paper dropped out of my hand, and I fell almoſt ſenſeleſs, upon a couch! When I recovered my ſpeech, I bid her read it, and tell me what it meant?

She quickly ſaw through the deteſted villainy and at once exclaimed, "your "huſband is abuſed! that wicked Co- "lonel Walter has deceived him—My "aunt, unhappy and infatuated woman! "correſponds with him, and has doubt- "leſs tranſmitted an account of Lord "Lucan's being here."

Her ſurmiſe was equal to conviction, and I that moment beheld myſelf the victim

victim of that wretch's disappointed passion—O could my heart have told me I was an innocent one, how slightly should I have regarded the utmost malice of this fiend!

I need not attempt to describe the distraction of my mind, during the journey. Harriet was so visibly affected with my grief, though unknowing of the cause, that I would, if possible, have concealed it from her; and even accused myself for making her heart so early acquainted with sorrow.

When we arrived at Southfield, Benson, with tears in her eyes, informed me, that Sir William was dangerously ill; the vein in his lungs, which had been closed, for some time, had opened, and the physician who attended him, had but

very

very faint hopes of his life—The agony which this account threw me into, I ſhall leave to your own ſenſibility to imagine—I fell upon my knees, and in an heart felt extaſy, cried out, "Gracious "God! have pity on me! ſpare my "huſband's life! and let not his murderer "triumph over him and me, at once!"

Harriet and Benſon raiſed me from the ground, with a mingled expreſſion of pity and horror in their looks—they thought me mad—I was, alas! too ſenſible, at leaſt to miſery!—When I became a little more calm, Harriet aſked me if I would not go to ſee Sir William? I ſtarted up at the queſtion, and would have flown that moment to his bed-ſide, had not Benſon interpoſed, by telling me he was juſt fallen into a ſlumber, and that the doctor had given orders he ſhould not be diſturbed.

The idea that his mind was at rest afforded a little ease to my own; the tears ran silent and plenteous down my cheeks, while my heart offered up the most fervent petitions to the fountain of life, for his recovery!—By degrees I became composed, and, at Harriet's entreaty, I tried to eat, and retired to rest.

In the morning, doctor Hartford, who attends Sir William, desired to see me—He told me that the sudden and violent return of his patient's disorder had proceeded from some perturbation of mind, and that the only chance he had for his life, was the being kept in a state of apathy, as much as possible, and advised my not seeing him, for some days yet, as even the most pleasing emotion might be productive of fatal consequences.

I told

I told him I would not attempt any thing that ſhould injure his health, though I moſt earneſtly wiſhed to ſee him.—He ſaid he had taken the liberty of preventing two letters from being delivered to him, for the reaſons he had then given me—He preſented them to me; I ſaw that one of them was the letter I had ſent, by the ſervant, the other was from Colonel Walter.

Surely, if a breach of truſt could ever be deemed pardonable, the peculiarity of my ſituation might have furniſhed an excuſe for reading this letter! but my heart revolted at the mean idea—I gave both of them to Harriet, and bid her keep them till her uncle ſhould be able to read them himſelf.

About

"dare not look upon me!" Harriet then acquainted him of the restraint his physician had imposed on me. "It is very "true, he replied, the sight of her would "kill me! but let her write, if she has "any thing to say in her defence."

She then gave him my letter — He seemed much agitated while he read it; then said he was too weak to bear these painful conflicts, and bad her tell me he would receive me, as soon as he was able, but only to confront me with such proofs, as were indubitable, and never, from that moment, see me more.

Alas! my sister, what will now become of me! grant it were possible I could be able to undeceive Sir William,

and

and remove even the ſhadow of ſuſpicion from his thoughts, muſt I not always live in fear? a fear which my own conſciouſneſs will ſtill create! That mutual band of conjugal felicity, a perfect confidence! is now for ever broken.—The gloomy reflections that dwell within my boſom will ſtill appear, and raiſe up freſh diſquiets and alarms within my huſband's breaſt: though he conceals his doubts, my heart will feel them, and ſecretly repine that even the ſacrifice of my unhappy paſſion has not been able to procure his peace! yet this is the ſole proſpect, this the compounding hope, of ſuch a wretch as I!

Harriet has ſeen her uncle every day; and, in conſequence of their converſations, I have written to him twice—He

ſeems much affected while he reads my letters, and yet returns again to his unjuſt ſuſpicions—Colonel Walter's letter has been delivered to him; he inquired whether I know who it came from, and upon Harriet's telling him I did, he replied, that has more weight with me than all that ſhe has proteſted under her hand—There is, yet at leaſt, ſome virtue in her.

Indeed my ſiſter, were I not convinced it is my duty to calm Sir William's mind, I could, with the utmoſt compoſure, ſubmit to, and ſink under, the cruel calumny thrown out againſt me—The world, and all that it contains, ſeems to recede from my now feeble graſp—The dejection of my ſpirits has diffuſed an univerſal languor through

my

my whole frame, and ſome bleſſed intelligence whiſpers me, that ſoon, very ſoon, this poor torn heart will be at peace! ſurely, my Fanny, you will, you ought, I mean, rejoice, at my deliverance!

I am glad of your happineſs, of my brother's, and of every one's; I could at this moment rejoice in a certainty of my being the only wretched creature upon earth.—I wiſh I could prevent your ſending a thought, or a ſigh, this way! your ſorrow for my miſery can but increaſe it—Strive to forget it, then, perhaps I may yet do ſo too—But never ſhall I ceaſe to remember, that I am

your truly affectionate ſiſter.

LETTER LXX.

Lord HUME to Lord LUCAN.

WOULD you believe it, Lucan, I am become a philoſopher! and that by the worſt of all poſſible means, experience — I find there is no ſuch thing as permanent happineſs, for in the every moment that I looked down with pity upon kings, my cup has been daſhed with a good ſmart doſe of coloquintida.

For ſome time before my marriage, both Sir George Cleveland and I obſerved that my dear Fanny was frequently dejected, and melancholy; but whenever we ſeemed to take notice of this indiſpoſition of mind, ſhe attributed it to the change of climate, and immediately aſſumed an air of chearfulneſs.

For

For my own part, I ſometimes thought that her uneaſineſs might proceed from a recollection of my former conduct, and therefore endeavoured to diſſipate her ſuſpicions, by every mark of the ſincereſt attachment—I flattered myſelf I had ſucceeded, as ſhe had given me her hand without the leaſt affectation of reluctance, which young ladies ſometimes aſſume the appearance of, in order to enhance the value of the gift.

I think there never was a blither bridegroom than myſelf — indeed I felt myſelf moſt truly happy—Yet my Fanny's fits of melancholy frequently returned, and I have ſometimes ſurpriſed her in tears! I uſed to kiſs them off, and begged to know the cauſe; ſhe conſtantly evaded my requeſt, but with

ſo much tenderneſs and delicacy, that I could not inſiſt on her compliance, or even let her ſee that I was unhappy myſelf, leſt it ſhould render her more ſo.

In this kind of *mortal ſtate* we paſſed ſeveral weeks; but a letter that was delivered to her lately, has unravelled the myſtery.—We were alone in her dreſſing-room when it was brought to her —While ſhe read it her countenance changed ſo viſibly, that I could not avoid taken notice of into her; ſhe burſt into tears, and exclaimed, my unhappy ſiſter! What! is ſhe dead? I aſked—Not yet, ſhe anſwered. and ſunk back as if near fainting in her chair—By Heaven, Lucan, I would not go through ſuch another moment, for the diamond eyes of the Indian idol—I forget his name—that are computed to be worth a million and a half!

As ſoon as ſhe had recovered, ſhe entreated me not to mention what had happened, to Sir George, or his lady; then told me that Lady Barton was the moſt miſerable being upon earth, from the villainy of a vile fellow who lives in their neighbourhood, and was himſelf in love with her, who, by a falſe accuſation of her to her huſband, has rendered him ſo outrageouſly jealous, as almoſt to endanger Sir William's life; that, from her ſiſter's letters, ſhe had reaſon to believe that ſhe alſo was dying, and implored me to ſet out for Ireland with her immediately, in order to reſcue lady Barton, if poſſible, by removing her from that ſcene of miſery and diſtreſs.

I readily acquieſced in her deſire, diſcovering ſtill new charms in her ten-

der and generous affection for her unhappy ſiſter, which has been the ſole ſource of her melancholy—She gave me many prudent reaſons for not acquainting her brother with this affair; ſo that our ſcheme was mentioned at dinner, as a ſudden thought, and every thing was fixed for our ſetting out in two days —But pity me, Lucan, when I tell you that my whole of life, my heart's dear Fanny, was taken ill that night, the next day grew much worſe, and on the third, the phyſicians pronounced her diſorder to be a miliary fever. She is now, thank Heaven! out of danger, but weak, low, and in her bed. I did not know how truly, how fondly, I loved her, Lucan! till now—I am not aſhamed of the blot a tear has juſt made.

Her

Her impatience to ſet out for your country is unabated, but I fear it will be ſome time before her ſtrength will be equal to the journey. She has commanded me to write a few lines, in *gayété de cœur*, to lady Barton, as if jealous of the correſpondence between them, and ſaying that I will only allow her to anſwer her letters, in perſon—This is meant to excuſe her ſilence, without alarming her about her illneſs—How tender, how conſiderate!

I hope to ſee you ſoon in Dublin, and that we ſhall return to England together; if Lady Barton ſhould come with us, we ſhall be a good melange enough for a *parti quarré*—I am reſolved to be gay; my wife will, I hope, be chearful, when ſhe has reſcued her ſiſter

from the green-eyed monſter—You will be polite, and agreeable, at leaſt; and I think lady Barton will have no great cauſe to be ſorrowful at leaving a huſband, with whom ſhe has never been happy, as Fanny has now confeſſed to me, on this occaſion.

In my next, I hope I ſhall be able to fix the day of our ſetting out—Till we meet, adieu, my dear Lucan,

yours,

HUME.

LETTER LXXI.

Lady BARTON to Lady HUME.

IT is over, my dear ſiſter! my trial and condemnation are paſt, and I now ſink under the weight of his cenſure, from which

which I neither ought, nor desire to appeal—Yesterday Sir William desired to see me; I instantly obeyed his summons, and approached him pale and trembling—But my wanness was the effect of ill health, and my tremor arose from weakness—Yet he perhaps might have attributed these symptoms to guilt, or fear; for a person arraigned, is generally half condemned.

I dreaded his flying into a rage at seeing me, but, to do him justice, he was unusually calm—As I entered the chamber, he said, "I am sorry, Madam, that "we should meet thus"—I told him I was sincerely grieved for having been the innocent cause of so much uneasiness to him—He repeated the word *innocent*, and then launched out into the most cruel,

and I am happy to ſay, falſe accuſation, that ever was uttered.

Wretched! wretched man! my heart this moment feels for what his muſt one day ſuffer! He was violently agitated, while he proceeded in his accuſation; and I ſometimes thought that he appeared to doubt the improbabilities he uttered, till he produced lord Lucan's picture, which ſeemed like a viſible miracle to corroborate the whole legend.

I offered not the leaſt interruption, while he ſpoke; but when he had ended, I threw myſelf upon my knees before him, and in the moſt ſolemn manner aſſured him, that I had never been guilty of an act of diſhonour, though I confeſſed that my affections had not been in-

violably restrained to him; perhaps from the harshness of his manners, perhaps from my own weakness.

He was variously affected whilst I spoke, and often broke out into extravagant exclamations, denying the truth of what I said, by recurring to the charge against me—At other times he appeared softened, for an instant; but then the picture, like Othello's handkerchief, still turned his heart to stone.

Why was I not at liberty to unravel that mystery? But my word was long since passed to keep it secret, and never shall that bond be forfeited; nor shall my innocence ever be justified by dishonour. Besides, this was but a circumstance, and that equivocal, at most.

He

He then ſaid, that as my family, all but myſelf, were truly reſpectable, he would, for their ſakes, take ſome time to conſider how he ſhould act, before he branded me with infamy; and that I might remain a priſoner in his houſe, till he had determined on my ſentence—But from that moment interdicted me from quitting my apartment; and, what was ſtill much more ſevere, from ſeeing or converſing with my ſole comfort, the tender, the affectionate, the amiable Harriet.

I wept, but it was in ſilence, and yielded to this hard decree without a murmur — He might have been more cruel to me—Benſon is ſtill permitted to attend me; nor has he yet forbidden me the melancholy pleaſure of writing to my

ſiſter!

ſiſter! I thank him, moſt ſincerely, for theſe two indulgencies, and moſt devoutly hope I ſhall not want them long.

While I live, I ſhall never ceaſe to lament my being the fatal and ſole ſource of ſorrow to my beloved ſiſter—O, dry your tears, my Fanny, and turn your eyes to happier views—See an adoring huſband, and a tender brother court you to happineſs—Forget the wretch that mars your preſent bliſs, and renders you ungrateful for Heaven's bounty.

My heart ſinks in me—My friend, my little Harriet, is juſt ſent away! I hear the wheels that carry her from hence—they roll upon my heart! Protecting angels guard her innocence! and ſoothe the ſorrows of her tender mind!

I know

I know it, Benson, she was drowned in tears—I feel them stream this moment on my breast—Alas! my Fanny, my head turns round, I cannot write another line.

Adieu, adieu!

L. BARTON.

LETTER LXXII.

Lady BARTON to Lady HUME.

DID you not think I was *completely* wretched when I last wrote to you? I thought so then, but find my error now—There is no bounds to miseries like mine; the swelling waves rise upon one another, and overwhelm me—Why does this feeble bark struggle so long, why not sink down at once to dark oblivion! But I will silence this repining heart, nor murmur at my sufferings.

About eight o'clock, this morning, there arrived a meſſenger from Walterſburgh, and in a few minutes after, Sir William ruſhed into my room, with an appearance of frenzy in his air and countenance.—"Vileſt of women!" cried he out, "you have now completed "your wickedneſs—But think not that "either you, or your accomplice, ſhall "eſcape—That pity, which pleaded in "my weak heart, even for an adultreſs, "will but increaſe my rage againſt the "murdereſs of my friend." He then quitted me abruptly, as if bent upon ſome horrid purpoſe.

Yes, Fanny, I have heard my name traduced by the two vileſt terms that ever diſgraced human nature, and yet I neither ſighed nor ſhed a tear—I became

came petrified with horror, and fixed my eyes in ſtupid ſilence on the door at which Sir William iſſued, till Benſon opened it ſome minutes after, and found me quite immoveable.

I blame him not for his intemperate wrath; he thinks he has juſt cauſe—There has been a duel—Lord Lucan is in fault—he was the challenger—He has deſtroyed my fame and peace of mind, for ever! It is but juſt it ſhould be ſo, that he who cauſed my weakneſs, ſhould puniſh it.

I hear that he is dangerouſly wounded, and Colonel Walter mortally—O could I hope my prayers might reach the throne of mercy! But am I not, as Sir William ſtiles me, a murdereſs? too

ſurely

ſurely ſo! I am the fatal cauſe of all theſe crimes—Forgive me, gracious Heaven! No words can paint my agonies! death only can relieve them.

A note from Sir William! it has broke my heart—I fear I cannot ſee to copy it.

Walterſburg.

MADAM,

I know not how to plead the pardon, either of myſelf, or the unhappy Colonel Walter! But if the ſtrongeſt remorſe for the injuries he has done you, added to the loſs of life, which is now ebbing faſt from his wound, may be thought an atonement, you will comply with his requeſt, and grant him your forgiveneſs.

As to myſelf, I can only ſay that I have been moſt cruelly deceived, and

nothing

nothing but Colonel Walter's present situation, confession, and contrition, could ever have induced me to forgive his having been the cause of so much unhappiness to you—I forgive him mine, because he has repaired it—My own offence, my own failings have rendered me charitable to his—But if Heaven shall spare my life, it shall be spent in penitence for the wrongs I have done you.

Colonel Walter entreats you will let him know, where his wife and child now are? Judge my surprise at hearing him acknowledge such connections! But there is now no time for reflections, as doctor Hartford and the surgeon both say he has not long to live. Death will be ease from the agonies he now endures in his tortured mind; and I trust

in

in Heaven's mercy, that they will enſure his future peace.

Be ſpeedy, my much injured Louiſa, in affording ſome relief to the moſt unhappy wretch I ever yet beheld, and in his pardon include that of your abuſed, and much afflicted huſband,

W. BARTON.

P. S. Lord Lucan's wound is not dangerous—I will write for Harriet to return immediately to Southfield.

I wrote upon the inſtant, but even at this ſhort interval cannot recollect what I ſaid — My ſenſations were too much diverſified, too rapid, to leave ſtrong traces on the memory — What did I not feel! horror! pity! grief! and even a gleam of joy! joy that my name

ſhall

ſhall not diſgrace my family, nor make it hateful, when I ſhall be but duſt!

Sir William's kindneſs in reſtoring Harriet to me is the moſt pleaſing proof that he could give of his returning confidence—I know that it will make her happy, and therefore do I doubly thank him — All other marks of his regard muſt come too late—We cannot live together—Yet I feel that death alone will part us—His approaches have long been welcomed by me; I have thought his harbingers were ſlow, and chid their tardy, though ſure progreſs—Yet would I now delay their lingering ſteps, till I could fold my ſiſter to my heart, then bid it ceaſe to beat—This is a cruel, but a natural wiſh—I will not preſs for the indulgence of it.

I am moſt truly thankful that Lord Lucan's life is ſafe, but cannot form the leaſt conjecture why he ſhould hazard it, as he has done—It is impoſſible that he ſhould know the injuries I have ſuſtained from Colonel Walter—To you alone have I revealed my ſufferings. Even Harriet was a ſtranger to the cauſe of my diſtreſs, till Sir William's violence informed her of his ſuſpicions; and ſure I am, ſhe would not publiſh my diſgrace. This is a point that I could wiſh was cleared—Yet of what moment is it to me now?

I have juſt received a letter from Lord Hume—excuſe my ſilence to him, and aſſure him of my affectionate regards—My trueſt tendereſt love awaits my brother—and I charge you, Fanny, never

to

to let him know what I have suffered—it would wound his peace, when I shall be at rest.

Another note from Sir William, containing unbounded thanks for what he calls my condescending goodness—Can there be any merit in the forgiveness of one frail and erring being, to another! I will try if I can rest—good-night, my dearest sister,

L. BARTON.

LETTER LXXIII.

Lady BARTON to Lady HUME.

SIR William returned, about ten o'clock this morning, from Waltersburgh, and I was not up—I used to be an early riser, Fanny—But may now say with Anna, in Douglas—

"Thy

"Thy votaries, grief, great nature's order break,
"And change the midnight to the moon-tide hour."

It was near eleven before I rang my bell; and though Sir William expreſſed the greateſt impatience to ſee me, he would not ſuffer Benſon to diſturb me—Why do theſe *petits ſoins* appear too late for him or me to profit from! As ſoon as ſhe informed me that he was in the houſe, I roſe and dreſſed me with the utmoſt expedition; then ſent to let him know that I was ready to receive his commands—I found my mind infinitely more agitated than when he had ſummoned me to appear before him; yet I did not tremble as I then had done, but my heart beat quicker.

He approached me with a look of tender anxiety, which I had never ſeen

him wear; I arose as he entered, he caught my hand and dropped upon one knee, "Lady Barton, said he, it is im-"possible for words to express my feel-"ings; could you be sensible of what "they are, you would both pardon and "pity me!" I made the strongest effort in my power to raise him from the ground, but both my strength and speech forsook me, and I sunk motionless within his arms.

When I recovered, I found myself reclining upon Benson's bosom, and Sir William walking about the room, like a distracted person, exclaiming, "She "is lost! is gone for ever! and I have "killed her! I am the murderer, now!"

The moment I could speak, I said every thing in my power to calm his mind,

mind, but he continued to accuſe himſelf much more ſeverely than he could deſerve; and when he looked upon my altered face, tears ſtreamed from his ſad eyes—Indeed I am much changed from what I was—I think you ſcarce could know me.

Colonel Walter is no more—Though I have no faith in the efficacy of prayers for the dead, yet I cannot refrain from offering up mine—For religion, prompted by misfortunes, is apt to exceed to ſuperſtition. But enough, or rather ſay too much, of this ſad ſubject.

Harriet is returned—She ſtarted at ſeeing me—It is amazing what a viſible alteration a few days has made in my appearance; I do not myſelf perceive any

great internal change; an encreasing weakness is all that I am sensible of—Death seems to be grateful for the ardent wishes I have so often made for him, and approaches me with the gentleness of a friend—The variety of terrors I have gone through, have disarmed him of his, and though they at present seem to be passed, (pardon me, my sister!) I cannot help considering my dissolution as a deliverance.

As soon as Harriet arrived, Sir William brought her by the hand, and presenting her to me, said, "I am happy, "my dear niece, to restore you again to "the protection of the best, and most in-"jured woman breathing—My future "conduct to her, joined to your care and "assiduity, will, I hope, restore her health, "and make us all happy, once more."

I bowed aſſent to Sir William's impoſſible wiſh, and embraced my beloved Harriet with all the fondneſs of a mother—I ſhall be a loſs to her, Fanny; my heart melts at the idea of her diſtreſs—I am not able to hold the pen longer, at preſent, I will reaſſume it to-morrow.

I hope that contrary winds are the ſole cauſe of my not hearing from you—The agitation of my mind, for ſome time paſt, has prevented my thinking too deeply on your ſilence—I flatter myſelf that the next poſt-day will prevent my future anxiety.

Adieu,

L. BARTON.

LETTER LXXIV.

Lady BARTON to Lady HUME.

MY illneſs, or rather languor, encreaſes ſo faſt upon me, that it is with much difficulty I can ſupport myſelf in my chair, for an hour together; yet they talk of carrying me to Liſbon —How abſurd! as if a long journey could cure a broken heart—Mine is the gentleſt of decays; the marks of my approaching diſſolution are almoſt as viſible in the faces that ſurround me, as in my own—Sir William is the very ſtatue of grief; no pen or pencil can deſcribe the tender expreſſion of concern and ſolicitude that appears in Harriet's face —Benſon is become a ſpectre; and doc-

tor

tor Hartford, though long uſed to look on the approaches of death, ſeems ſtartled and affected by them now.

The unhappy affair of the duel has not yet been explained; but I have neither curioſity or concern about that, or any thing elſe, now left—Even my unhappy paſſion have I long ſince ſacrificed to my duty—Be witneſs, for me, Heaven! that from the moment of Sir William's danger, the fond delirium vaniſhed from my heart, and left not even one tainted trace behind!—You have known all the conflicts of my ſoul, and were there ought that could diſturb it now, to you I would confeſs the painful perturbation, as to Heaven—but all is calm, my ſiſter!

"Still as the ſea, ere winds were taught to blow,
"Or moving ſpirit bad the waters flow,
"Soft as the ſlumbers of a ſaint forgiven,
"And mild, as opening gleams of promiſed Heaven."

May the laſt lines be prophetic! Amen! Adieu! I will not yet ſay a *laſt* one, to my beloved ſiſter.

L. BARTON.

P. S. You are at liberty to acquaint my brother with my ſituation — No ſtain will now reflect on him, from me. My memory will ſtill be dear to thoſe I love, to him, to you, my ſiſter—This thought will ſmooth my paſſage to the grave, and I ſhall reſt in peace.

LET-

LETTER LXXV.

Lord LUCAN to Lord HUME.

Dear Hume,

YOUR last letter has brought about a fatal event. I shall make no merit of letting you into a secret, which is now at an end for ever! Lady Barton was the charming woman, to whom my heart had dedicated my life. Her beauty, purity, and frankness, sure never yet were equalled! My attentions and regards, I fear, were too much marked towards her, for it seems they were taken notice of by a gentleman, Colonel Walter, who likewise visited at her house.

This happened unfortunately to excite ſome jealouſy in his breaſt. Though how was it poſſible for ſuch a being as her to inſpire a love without honour! He gave hints of his ſuſpicion, though they then appeared to be of no conſequence; but upon reading your letter, my mind quickly referred to the perſons in queſtion, though you neither mentioned his name, or mine.

I was ſhocked at the falſhood and villainy of the ſtory—Had Lady Barton been an object of the utmoſt indifference to me, honour and humanity muſt have excited me to exculpate both her and myſelf, from ſo vile a ſlander—But, adoring her as I do! mere juſtice was too lukewarm a principle of action—I added reſentment to it.

I ſet

I set out immediately for his house, and charged him with his perfidy—He denied it at first, but when I had produced my voucher, he attempted to excuse himself, by saying, "that as the la-
"dy had herself acknowledged a passion
"for me, to him, it required no great
"reach of philosophy to deduce the na-
"tural conclusion he had drawn from
"such premises."

"I shall then render myself worthy of
"such a confession, said I, by chastis-
"ing your breach of honour in repeat-
"ing it."—I had come prepared, and told him so, desiring him to follow me to the end of a grove near the place, which he soon did—We were both wounded, but he mortally. I took care of him home—He seemed sensible and sorry

for

for his crime, and ſaid he would repair it —He is ſince dead.

Lady Barton is now languiſhing in the laſt ſtage of a conſumption—And I am the moſt wretched being upon earth —I would fly out of the kingdom this moment, but that I muſt ſtay to take my trial here—Alas! of what uſe would flight be to me—Can I leave the remembrance of my ſorrows behind! Let me ſee you as ſoon as you arrive, and believe me

your unhappy friend,

LUCAN.

LET-

LETTER LXXVI.

Lady HUME to Lady BARTON.

Chester.

IN what terms shall I express the feeling of my heart, for my more than amiable, my unhappy sister! her sufferings have brought me near the brink of the grave, and now that they are past, why does she cruelly refuse her own assent to life, and happiness? Live, my Louisa! and do not doom me for ever to lament that I *was* blessed with such a friend!

I am scarce recovered from a dangerous fever, and yet have got so far on my way to assist your recovery, unmindful of my own—Let not my fond attention be thrown away, I conjure you!

but

LETTER LXXVII.

Lady HUME to Sir GEORGE CLEVELAND.

Southfield.

YES, my dear brother, I have ſeen her! but fear I ſhall not long enjoy that bleſſing — Death lies in ambuſh on her lovely cheek, and lurks beneath the dimples of her ſmiles.

My lord ſaid ſhe never looked ſo beautiful as now—I think ſo, too! Why muſt thoſe beauties periſh in the grave? She was tranſported at ſeeing me, joy overpowered her feeble frame, ſhe became quite exhauſted, and was obliged to retire to her chamber, very early.

The next morning ſhe ſent for Sir William and me, into her dreſſing-room; She

She appeared more animated than I had ever ſeen her, when ſhe addreſſed him thus—" Heaven has indulged my ut-
" moſt wiſh, in granting me the happi-
" neſs of ſeeing my beloved ſiſter; but I
" ſhould be unworthy of this bleſſing
" if I did not endeavour that you alſo
" ſhould be a gainer by it — Here, Sir
" William, pointing to me, here is the
" witneſs of my weakneſs and my virtue,
" every moment of my heart has been
" laid open to her view, and to her I
" dare appeal, to juſtify its purity, while
" with myſelf, ſhe muſt condemn its
" frailty—If there yet needs a farther
" proof to ſatisfy you, I will entreat my
" Fanny to ſubmit the letters which have
" paſſed between us, to your peruſal—
" There you will ſee the conflicts of a
" weak, not wicked mind; and for the

"ſingle treſpaſs of my heart, though an "involuntary one, I now upon my knees "implore your pardon."

Sir William caught her in his arms, before ſhe could kneel, and bathed her face with his faſt flowing tears—His voice was inarticulate, and he could ſcarce pronounce, "'Tis I that ought to kneel, "and ſue for pardon, my angel! my "Louiſa! O ſpare yourſelf and me theſe "ſtrong emotions! I, only I, have been "to blame! And could I now reſtore "your life and happineſs, by parting "with my own, I not ſhould think my "puniſhment ſevere—But O, to loſe "you thus! is miſery extreme."

How ſeverely do I now reproach myſelf for not ſooner acquainting you with the unhappy ſituation of our dear ſiſter!

Perhaps

Perhaps you might have rendered it more eaſy, and ſaved her precious life! But it was at her requeſt that I concealed it till Colonel Walter's dying confeſſion had cleared her innocence.

I cannot write more, my heart is breaking! ſoon, too ſoon! ſhall I, I fear, ſubſcribe myſelf your only and affectionate ſiſter,

F. HUME.

LETTER LXXVIII.

Lady HUME to Sir GEORGE CLEVELAND.

Southfield.

SHE is gone, for ever! I ſhall no more behold her! her gentle ſpirit took its flight to heaven, while theſe fond arms in vain endeavoured to ſup-

port the feeble frame from whence it parted—She ſunk upon my boſom, and expired! nor ſigh nor groan gave warning of her death, ſhe cloſed her eyes, and ſlept for ever!

No words can paint the grief and diſtraction of her unhappy huſband, the tender ſorrow of the gentle Harriet, or the heart-felt anguiſh of your

afflicted ſiſter,

F. Home.

THE END.